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JAMES HATFIELD

AND THE

BEAUTY OF BUTTERMERE.





in the new world a few birds were left

JAMES HATFIELD

AND THE

BEAUTY OF BUTTERMERE :

A Story of Modern Times.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY ROBERT CRUIKSHANK.

"I have great comfort from this fellow ; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him : his complexion is perfect gallows ! Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging ! Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage."—TEMPEST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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v. 2 ADVENTURES

OF

JAMES HATFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

“ The beams flash on,
And make appear the melancholy wrecks
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships,
Quivers, helms, spears, and gorgon-headed targes,
And the emblazonry round which death laughed.”

SHELLEY.

IF Golefield had looked forward, on his admission to Mike's cell, to gratify his curiosity in seeing the venerable stranger there, he was at the same time constrained to own that, for the infirm frame and tottering limbs of age, the passage into the weird mariner's cell was little convenient, as we are about to witness. Accordingly, if he should not find that aged form where he expected, his surprise would not be very great; and his conclusion then would be, that the stranger had withdrawn just in time to avoid encountering himself and Routhmore, as indicated by the sound of the footsteps they had just heard receding from the spot.

But to proceed on our way into the cell. After passing, then, the rude door which closed up its mouth, the visitor entered a narrow passage, which gradually became narrower, like an eel-weir or basket; or yet more humble illustration, the wire adit of a mouse-trap. Along this a dim gleam of light was thrown by an iron lamp which swung from the top. Inconvenient, however, as it was, the passage was not very long, and the visitors of Mike were in some degree recompensed for the constraint and obscurity of the entrance, by the superior scope, and rude, yet singular and interesting decoration of the cell itself. As we omitted the description of it on our former visit in company with Renmore, we will supply it here.

It was well lit up on the present occasion by the aid of two steel reflectors on each side the cell, with a small brass lamp in front of each; the reflectors multiplying the light to a degree that illumined every part of the cell, and shewed the minutest objects throughout its scope with perfect distinctness. There were all sorts of rude implements of warfare—spears, tomahawks, and scalping knives—suspended over the skins of beasts, round the sides of the cave. Many a rare and curious bird, too, whose shrill note once woke the wild echoes of woods in some uttermost part of the

earth, was preserved here. Shells of all hues and grotesque shapes stood side by side with huge dried calabashes and bamboo baskets. Old sea-chests and cable ends, and here and there a ponderous rusty anchor were seen; all of which conveyed to their singular possessor associations of many a perilous crisis of the deep, and on all of which he could descant with a vigour and earnestness which caught half its interest from the singular conviction displayed by the old man in all he related, that superior agencies were still in operation, and bore the greater part of the event, whatever the nature of it might be, that he retraced. It was this mystic tone and imaginative cast which gave all he said that complexion of awe which made him an object of fear and marvel to the rude vulgar, much more so than any marvels or dangers themselves which he related. Mike was no impostor; he might have been with much more reason pronounced, as the Scotch call it, "daft." He was thoroughly in earnest, and convinced of the truth of all his superstitious imaginings. You had only to hear him narrate a tale, and listen to the ordinary tone and style of his remarks, to understand that the old mariner was a thorough Fatalist. And as infatuated, perhaps, was he, and as conscientiously pertinacious in this respect, as any religious fanatic. If in this superstitious charac-

teristic he was not altogether unlike his marine brothers, yet no common or vulgar "tar" was Mike. He was himself as "unique" as his adventures. No sea slang commonly made up his style of address; there was too much sense of suffering at the old man's heart to permit him to dally with trifling thoughts, or to speak in the careless, jovial style of his reckless fellow-mates.

In fact, few could hear him speak and not feel with him, though they might condemn him for his superstitious fancies. "Fancies," however, or not,—they were so earnestly felt by himself that they for the time carried away with them the person to whom they were imparted; none could mark his furrowed brow, shaded with its silvery, straggling locks, and rendered yet more impressive in the earnestness of its expression, without sympathizing with him. It seemed, as he told his strange narratives, that he related them as imparted by some unearthly communication; and the narrator was no less an object of awe *in* himself than *to* himself, for he appeared as much to hold in religious awe the circumstances he narrated, as a priest of Dodona might be supposed to do, in imparting the solemn warnings heard in mystic accents at the shrine where he bowed. Hence the ruder hearer caught the contagion of an unaccountable fear from that which the old man evinced himself, and

a picture of which effect we have given in a previous stage of our story.

The first object, however, that was looked for by our two adventurers—for those who trusted themselves in the precincts of the wizard mariner's abode were considered scarcely less so by the good folk of the vicinage—was the venerable stranger, who seemed, indeed, in all respects, a worthy compeer of old Mike, whether from his years or the mysterious doubts concerning him. He was looked for, however, in vain; and though, if Miss Howbiggen had been of the party, she might possibly have addressed her inquiries with a view to elucidating the mystery of his “whereabout,” yet our two friends being of a less inquisitive (we were going to say “meddlesome”) disposition, they kept their inquiries on this topic to themselves, and addressed them to examining the various objects of curiosity which the cell exhibited to attract their attention.

“Indeed, Mike, you must have been a far voyager over the ocean-deep,” said Golefield, as he cast his eye on the savage gear of some barbarous island dwellers of the Pacific. “Why, what are these?” he added, examining some highly polished cups, curiously inlaid with pieces of that rare and beautiful shell whose varying colours blend the green, and blue, and gold together.

“Sculls, sculls,” said the old man. “Ay, if you wish for a tale now, that would suit for one of your stage-play vagaries, and make the mob gape,—why, you may have it. Those sculls, that look so clean, and fair, and white—I have seen them brimming with the blood of my comrades,—*that* have I!”

“Nay; the tale would be of painful interest indeed, Mike,” observed Golefield; “and acceptable to us, but that we look for another from you on the present occasion.”

“But just let us know—what! did you lose all your comrades of the crew, under the hands of these savages or cannibals, as they seem to be?” asked Routhmore.

Ay, ay; myself was the last that was to be butchered, but Fate kept me for other and future trials, and so I was permitted, I suppose, to make my escape.”

“And you should be thankful, Mike, to Heaven that you did,” observed Routhmore.

“Thankful! and so I was. Thankful or unthankful, however, such was my destiny; and so, having seen all the poor fellows butchered before my face, I made an effort to preserve these few relics of them—one, two, three! there they are!” said the old man, counting the sculls, as he regarded them with a fixed and dreamy stare, as if

musings over the scenes of trial and horror which the sight of those relics recalled.

“ But what is this ? ” said Routhmore, calling Golefield’s attention to a splendid branch of white coral that stood as an ornament at the end of the cell, and seemed almost like a petrified tree, so beautiful and large were its ramifications.

“ It is a charmed bough ! a charmed bough ! ” ejaculated Mike, with a start, as he turned abruptly away from gazing at the skulls, and pursuing the dreams attached to them. “ The winds whistled, and the deep raved for our lives in vain, while that branch was on deck ! Ha, ha ! . . . to see some of the sailors fling themselves on their knees and worship it, would have made even *you* laugh ; for you—and all the world almost, as long as they are out of peril,” (he added, with a half sneer,) “ can afford to laugh at these strange events, and the excited feelings attached to them ! You mock the tale that speaks of them with awe and marvel ; but let me tell you, there are spirits invisible to you or me, or any of us, that may hover round a hulk, and sway events wondrously enough to excuse a poor mariner for a little superstition, as you would call it. . . . Methinks you would look pale to see what I have seen ! . . . Well, well ! not the wisest of us know how far our thoughts and actions, the

events of our lives, the movements of our moral, or even bodily pilgrimage, are influenced."

"Indeed, Mike, I believe firmly with you that there are unseen and superior agencies that may often act (as you more than surmise) in influencing our thoughts and actions."

"Superior agencies!" ejaculated Routhmore; "say at once, an all-swaying Providence."

"You are right—you are right!" said Golefield, in a lowered tone to his friend; "but it would be perhaps to lose our expected tale were we to dispute Mike's 'Code of Fatalism;'" and then raising his voice and addressing the old man, he continued, "but we are both of us, my friend, Mr. Routhmore and myself, anxious that you would launch us, Mike, on that sea of wonders where you were saved through a child, and which we long to navigate with you."

"Why *that* tale?" said the old man, impatiently. "See you that sea-chest yonder?—look at the handle of it."

"It has something attached to it like the skeleton of a hand!" said Golefield.

"Ay! it was an honest hand as ever was shaken in confidence by a friend, while the life-blood throbbed in the veins. I have grasped it many a time. Well; will a story of that hand suit you?—

how it came there? why I loved the being of whose clay-frame it once formed a part? eh? will that suit?" asked the old mariner, eagerly.

"It were a tale strange enough," said Routhmore, "to answer for a host of others; but I have a singular curiosity, Mike, to hear the one my friend here refers to."

"Yes, yes!" added Golefield; "that one Mike;—come, good Mike."

"Why that tale?" ejaculated the old man, with renewed impatience, as he continued muttering to himself; "it was but the other day I told it to the crowd; and it becomes more painful to me as its destinies approach nearer completion." And then raising his voice, he continued, "Well; I see you demand it of me."

With these words, he rose hastily up, and adjusting one or two rude seats by a little low table in the cell, he flung a loose covering over them of seal-skins, and motioned his two distinguished auditors to take, each of them, a seat, while he himself remained standing, as a posture more agreeable to that restlessness which the excitement of the story he was about to relate occasioned. With a hurried step and anxious look he strode once or twice up and down the cell in silence, when he suddenly stopped short in front of them, and launched, as it were, with an effort, into the

outset of his narrative,—as though the task were one of little satisfaction to him, and rather encountered than approached.

The reader being already acquainted with the narration, we shall take this opportunity of explaining a circumstance in connexion with it, which is yet due from us, and for offering which explanation the proper opportunity is now afforded. In a word, it relates to our hero's visit to old Mike after his parley with Simmonds, or rather Quandish. With feelings, then, of exultation and good-humoured raillery did Renmore relate how he had managed to avert the doom that menaced him. But exhibit what confidence he would, the old mariner little participated in his good spirits, and shook his head incredulously as he listened. "But for a time! but for a time!" muttered the sceptical Mike. "I have known a cloud hang overhead at sea a long time,—nay, seem to pass away for a while,—but burst in tempest and terror at last!" and then raising his voice, he continued, "Would that old Mike could smile with you at his 'superstitions,' as you are pleased to call them. How far they may be so or not will be proved, perhaps, too soon!" and here he muttered out again some words, which were those of an old Cumberland ballad, to the following effect, as far as they were distinguishable by Renmore's ear—

“ I nothing boast to be much versed
In cabalistic lore,
But only hint what shall betide
By what has been before.”

Such, then, was the result of our hero's night-visit to Mike's cell; and if the old man witnessed his confidence with scepticism, he yet witnessed it with compassion also. But happy, indeed, was the greeting which took place between Gertrude and our hero the next morning. Nor was he more joyed in being able to inform her that there was no necessity for his being called away from the spot (as we remember he had suggested to her as an excuse) than she was to hear the welcome intelligence of his stay.

But to return now to the cell, as the ancient mariner had now brought his narrative to a conclusion. His hearers could not forbear an inquiry or two concerning the fates of the infant adventurer it memorialized.

“ So you took him home to his parents, whom you say he subsequently left?” asked Golefield. “ And what have been his fortunes since that period? Where has been his home? Who has supplied the place of a parent to him?”

“ The wide world has been his home,” replied Mike, solemnly; “ and Destiny his parent and fosterer.”

“ Sublimely said, Mike,” answered Golefield ; “ but I should like to hear explained a little more particularly what the course of his track through life has been. A wayward one, I doubt not—and your silence would augur fraught with pain, with fear, with peril.”

“ Perhaps some fatal doom has already overtaken it ?” continued Routhmore, supplying the conclusion which he thought Mike’s countenance seemed to augur ; and he was about to renew the suggestion when the old man involuntarily started at this inquiry, which seemed to try his inmost soul. As if to evade any further questioning, he proceeded hastily to the entrance of the cave, and looking upon the dim waste without, he cried to his visitors, “ The lengthened shadows of the crag tell me the westering sun is fast sinking over the slope yonder. You will be late away for Keswick, gentlemen,—you will be late away ; and Mike will (so please you) give you a lift in his shallop over the meer.”

So saying, the ancient mariner, apparently determined to turn a deaf ear to any further inquiry, strode forward in advance of them, leaving them no alternative but to follow. This they were not sorry to do, when Routhmore recalled to his companion’s mind their engagement to dine with the Howbiggens.

“ We shall indeed be late,” he added ; “ and as for Mike, it is in vain to waste time in provoking him with ‘ further question,’ for he appears obdurate in his refusal to communicate anything further ;—so let us follow.”

“ In truth, he has wound our curiosity up to a high pitch : and whether it be his love of the mysterious or not, I have little doubt he knows, or pretends to know, the verification of all that his story is a forewarning of. It is a singular tale, and might well occupy the fancy of a poet.”

So saying, Golefield followed his friend out of the cell, when they espied the old man standing at the base of the rude natural staircase along the cliff-side already mentioned. He stood looking inquiringly for their approach, as if impatient of their delay. On seeing they were advancing, he proceeded up the cliff, on the top of which all three were soon making their way towards the meer, which was glistening in the crimson glow of sunset, at some distance below the heights.

“ It will be convenient for us—” observed Routhmore, by way of breaking the silence into which he observed his companion Golefield had fallen, “ this transit across the lake in Mike’s shallop. We will ask him to land us at the nearest point to Howbiggen’s house. It is not far, then, for us to proceed.”

But Golefield was rapt too entirely in the thoughts that occupied him to be sensible of his friend's observation.

"Ay, I suppose" (thought Routhmore to himself) "he is already putting Mike's tale into a poetical dress. Singular as it is in itself, it will win fresh charms when arranged in the colours of such a fancy."

And now they had arrived at the meer-bank, and Mike proceeded to unchain the little shallop which he had that morning moored in the cove, as already described.

"You are for Keswick, gentlemen, this evening?" asked the old man.

"Yes," answered Routhmore, for himself and his companion; "but we first of all are going to Mr. Howbiggen's, on the opposite side of the meer; so, have the goodness to land us near that point; the landing point nearer the Keswick road is further south than Mr. Howbiggen's, unless I mistake."

The old man nodded his head in token of assent, and the whole trio being now seated in the shallop, it flew along beneath the impulse of Mike's oars, as if they had been wings on which it skimmed the wave. Like the wings, too, (the golden glittering wings of some bird of fairy-land,) did those oars appear as they glittered in that rich yellow lustre in which

the pure flood was tinted. Nor was it long before the shadows of the foliage that bordered the opposite shore cast a grateful coolness over the burning waters; and those winged oars now relaxing their speed, drooped them like a bird's pinion when the spot of its roost is found.

CHAPTER II.

“He slyly laid hands on the important document, and secreted it.”—SCOTT.

To return now to the festive party at Mr. Howbiggen's. We remember that the fairer portion of it had withdrawn, while the “gentlemen” were left to “contract” their circles and “extend” their potations. When we say this, we do not mean to infer that they were carried to the debasing extent sanctioned by the usage of the period now in view. No; such was not the case in the instance of our better disciplined circle. Its revelry was centered chiefly in the innocent raillery of the little Doctor, as he amused himself with playing off the weapons of his banter, at the expense of his host and the sage “Squire” of Blacktarn by turns.

Of all things it so happened that Mr. Howbiggen was partial, as a matter of taste, to claret; but of all things, too, was claret the most mischievous in .

exasperating those gouty symptoms to which this gentleman's constitution was liable. Accordingly, on his proceeding to help himself to the dangerous beverage, an interdict was laid upon his so doing by the Doctor.

"What? actually helping yourself to claret? and in my presence, too?" exclaimed the merry disciple of Æsculapius, with a look of ludicrous horror, as his eye glanced from the claret to his host's visage, which was screwed up in a look half-apprehensive as to what he was doing, and half-irritable at the interdict imposed on him.

"Why, I thought you of all your medical brethren," muttered out Mr. Howbiggen, "picqued yourself on letting people have just what chiefly gratified their palates—eh? umph! How is this? I thought one of the maxims of *your* medical code was, that 'whatever we like we should indulge in, because our liking it is a sign it agrees with us!'"

"'Reason! reason!' as Falstaff says," replied Esdaile. "I do not flinch one iota from the principle you have just uttered; but let me ask, who ever heard of claret and the gout agreeing? Every rule, however good as a general principle, has, under certain circumstances, its modifications—its exceptions."

"Exceptions! he, he!" giggled out Howbiggen, dissatisfiedly, while he still hesitated to convey the claret to his lips.

“Oh! pray drink it by all means,” continued Esdaile, in a tone of irony. “I recommend you, and you will find out for once who is right and who is wrong. Claret, indeed! why,” he continued, turning to Renmore and Lawton, “I should have our excellent host turned into a very vinegar cruet were he to drink anything so acid as claret.”

A smile here played on the faces of the persons appealed to, in acknowledgment of this sally in illustration of Mr. Howbiggen’s native “acidity” of disposition; while the cynic now retorted, as he (with no very good grace) put aside the claret and helped himself to the less noxious juice of the grape afforded in sherry.

“Pah!” he said; “the acid of the claret can do me not half so much harm as your plaguing me, as you often do, with your pretended philosophical smattering about ‘mind and body!’ Your ‘reciprocity’ rubbish,—by which he professes,” added Howbiggen, turning to Renmore and Lawton, “that he can cure the mind by curing the body; which, no doubt, he fancies he is doing now, by telling me not to touch claret!—pah! pooh! let him give me back my happier hopes,—my glad feelings,—my pride of mind,—my just expectations,—my . . . all that rendered life worth living for,—the mind happy, the heart healthful,—then he

would see me well, indeed!—pooh, pooh!—It can't be,—it can't be.”

“Here,” said Esdaile, also addressing our hero and Lawton, “is the endless topic of contention between Mr. Howbiggen and myself. We both declare that we each of us begin at the wrong end in treating my friend's disordered habit. I, at any rate, proceed reasonably, that is, in doing all I can for the mortal clay-tenement, and as far as the soundness of this can be achieved, also strengthening and exhilarating the mind, as a consequence on the health of the body. He, on the contrary, asks for impossibilities,—he asks me for the feelings and hopes of youth! he might as well ask to be seventeen again. Now, which do you decide of the two ought to bow to the other?”

Mr. Lawton looked most oracularly profound, as if cogitating on some supreme plan that would solve the difficulty at once; but while this *Œdipus* was thus cogitating and sipping claret, our hero replied in a style of conciliation, politic no less than polite, since both the adversaries were equally pleased by it—“Why really, in your hands, Dr. Esdaile, I have little doubt that Mr. Howbiggen has everything done for him that the nature of his case will admit of——”

“Precisely!” interposed Esdaile.

“Ay, ay!” grumbled Howbiggen, “as far as

the nature of the case will admit perhaps ; but how far, pray, is that ?—ugh !”]

——“ But, I would certainly address myself also,” continued their polite arbitrator, “ to diverting the mind (as indeed is the case in the present instance) by such attractions as novelty, scenes of splendour, beauty, and excitement convey. The awaking new trains of thought, new impulses of feeling, new associations,—these are the best spiritual medicines we can prescribe. Now, all this appears to be done, in Mr. Howbiggen’s having repaired to this realm of ‘ tor-heights ’ and ‘ tarns,’ where all is beautiful as it is new.”

“ Vastly well ! vastly well said !” observed Mr. Lawton. “ Cleverly put ! Colonel Renmore has shewn, satisfactorily enough, that you have both pursued a course good in its way, and requisite withal, though I should be inclined to add that a little more active occupation would be of service. I would recommend some mental exercise beyond that even of the pleasurable excitement derived from all the sources that Colonel Renmore mentions so justly,—ahem ! I would wean the mind by a challenge a little more coercive than the mere luxuriation (if I may use the word) of pleasurable association. I should—ahem !—suggest a little scientific or experimental——”

. . . “ Oh, good heavens ! you would find me

‘an *impatient*,’ I take it, instead of a ‘*patient*,’ at that rate!” hastily interposed Howbiggen, as he added, with his usual growl, “I see plainly what you are coming to,—you are proceeding to place me on your own hobby of ‘*experimentalizing*.’ No, no; it is enough to be the victim of Esdaile’s quackery, without yours, my worthy friend!”

“Quackery, my dear Sir?” replied Mr. Lawton, with a native dignity that shewed he was superior to the effect of all such taunts. “What Dr. Esdaile’s nostrums may be, (ha, ha!) I really cannot say!”—and here he looked round at our hero with a consciousness that he was saying “a good thing,” as he laughed at his own *acumen*,—“but I am proud, I must say, of the ‘quackery’ by which I have managed (I flatter myself) to render a district, at one time a mere wilderness, productive of”

. . . “Potatoes, instead of peat, which was much more in character with it!” interposed Esdaile, adopting the pompous style of delivery of the Blacktarn philosopher. “Mighty triumph of enterprise and capital to be sure! but if my worthy patient here is to divert his attention and achieve alacrity of spirits by improving away all the beauties of the place, like yourself, I would rather see him spleen-eaten as he is!”

“Ugh!—much obliged! much obliged!” said

Howbiggen. "*Arcades ambo!*" he growled to Renmore, just loud enough to be heard. "Blockheads both!"

Esdaile's raillery, meantime, being called away from his host to the Blacktarn oracle, the reader will be amused by having a sample of this genius's experiments. Dr. Esdaile accordingly proceeded, as a smile played on his lip indicative of the spirit of banter in which he spoke.

"By-the-bye, Mr. Lawton, how did the 'new land-draining process answer?'"

"Oh, the under-ground meadow-draining affair, you mean!—ah!—yes . . . why, unfortunately, there was a slight oversight——"

. . . "Oversight! what, under your superintendence?—bless me!" exclaimed the Doctor, in a feigned ecstasy of ludicrous wonder.

"Why, yes; the most shrewd and sagacious may be deceived sometimes. And so it happened in the present instance; for, unfortunately, in leading our cut, or drain, through the farm-yard, we had not secured the bed of it sufficiently,—consequently (ahem!) there was what is called a 'settlement,' (a settlement, that is, of the water,)—so the foundation (ahem!) gave way, the brick-work fell in . . ."

. . . "And the water, fell out, eh? and set all the chickens, hens, and turkeys, cackling and floating in the flood—was that it?" asked the Doctor,

giving way at length to the burst of cachinnation which followed on the "experimentalist's" melancholy reply in the affirmative.

Thus unadvised, in fact, was too often the character of Mr. Lawton's experiments. It was fortunate, however, for his self-love and confidence, that he always (as has been already surmised) had an excuse ready; and the "wrong season," or "unforeseen accident," or some other such saving clause to the preamble of blunder, came in for his succour. In fact, Mr. Lawton, though a very worthy man, was, as at present regarded, but a specimen of that class that innovate for innovation's sake, without any matured or expedient plan; and whose self-love never permits them to imagine they can have been wrong, or to reap any salutary warning from past failure. A very numerous class, by-the-by, in the present age of projectors.

"And how did the pheasants thrive in the new preserve?" inquired Esdaile, again anticipating an answer about as decisive of his friend's "sagacity," as the former one.

"Why, unfortunately, it was not discovered till too late that there were fox-earths in the very same covers, and——"

——"They made a dinner of the young pheasants the 'very first day they were put into the cover, eh?—was that it?'"

“Why, upon my word, I fear,” said the philosopher, hesitating, “I must confess that . . . it did so happen; but then, who could possibly foresee such a contingency?” he added, appealing to his host, whose most charitable reply was, however, only a barbarous kind of satiric giggle or snort; while Renmore observed, with a more compassionate feeling and a gentler forbearance—

“Why, failure is the chance we run in all enterprise; and laudable indeed are those, and public-spirited too, who, nothing daunted by the apprehensions of possible failure, enter upon a course of experiment by which it often happens that their country—the objects of science—the cause of civilization—and mankind, are benefited.”

“True, true!—admirably said! It requires, let me tell you, Doctor, no little spirit to enter on the field of improvement!” exclaimed the Blacktarn philosopher, rallying at this “word of comfort,” and emboldened by which, he now in turn attacked the merry banterer Esdaile; his subject of boasting, however, being more interesting as regards what it led to, than in itself.

. . . “But come, Doctor,” he continued, “you shall not say that I am equally unfortunate in everything; for the newly constructed lock—of which I shewed you the model—has entirely answered all expectations. No thief in England can

pick it. . . . My own invention,—every ward in it, Colonel Renmore !—a curiosity in its way. I challenge a whole army of locksmiths to make such an one, without having the secret previously from me !”

“ Indeed ! it must be a most surprising and also valuable invention,” observed Renmore.

“ *Invaluable* say !” continued the sage inventor ; “ I defy even that prince of forgers, Hatfield himself, to make a ‘ fac-simile ’ of it, even should I shew it him ! And he can forge almost anything, they say. . . . Clever fellow that, but a terrible rascal no doubt.”

“ He must indeed be a clever fellow,” replied Renmore, smiling, “ if it is true that he has performed such feats of dexterity as is reported.”

“ Reported ! my good Colonel ; why every one says he is the cleverest rogue, ay, as well as the most polite one, ever witnessed in the annals of swindling ! He is a man that, if he knew you, would not let you escape without forging your handwriting sooner or later, and drawing on you for 500*l.*, or some such trifle ! Oh, a dreadfully clever fellow !—though I defy him to forge *my* handwriting for all that !”

“ Well, that is singular !” observed Renmore, smiling, while Dr. Esdaile cried—

“ No ! I defy any one, even Hatfield himself,

to forge our excellent friend Mr. Lawton's hand. Pray," he continued to the Squire of Blacktarn, who good-humouredly heard the following stricture on his hand of writ; "pray, take out a card, if you happen to have one about you, and produce it *pro bono publico*. And as Mr. Lawton accordingly acceded to this request, the little Doctor proceeded, holding up the card—"There is a hieroglyphic! A spider's legs dipped in an ink-stand, and crawling over a sheet of paper would form marks (you can't say *letters*) as legible!"

The "hieroglyphic" card extracted a smile from even old Howbiggen, who said, gruffly—"If Hatfield could forge that writing, he could forge the old Zend tablets of the Persian Magi!"

"Ay; make the Rosetta Stone and the Irish Bobiloth alphabet plain reading to a running man!" added Esdaile.

"I think," observed Mr. Lawton, with an air of pompous triumph, as if there was something to be very proud of in his atrocious "hand of writ," "he would find it rather a difficult experiment."

"An awkward one, certainly," said Dr. Esdaile.

"Indeed," observed Renmore, appearing to take but a cursory glance at the "hieroglyphic" in question, but at the same time observing it acutely and narrowly—"Indeed, I should think it somewhat embarrassing to copy it; still, I would hardly

refuse laying a wager that this famous Hatfield you speak of would forge it."

"Done for a hundred !" cried Lawton. "I should not mind witnessing the experiment ; but how are we to prove the circumstance ?"

"Oh, it is impossible," said Renmore, smiling. "However, an opportunity may occur."

"Ay, ay ; you mean that he is likely to be apprehended sooner or later, and then we may chance to obtain a sample of his skill, on an application being made to him for that purpose, I doubt not ; and thus the wager may be eventually decided."

"I dare say, in some such way," . . . Renmore was proceeding to reply, when his words were interrupted by the entrance here of the returned truants, Messrs. Golefield and Routhmore, in the former of which he recognised the "geological speculator" he had heretofore met, as described in an earlier stage of our story. Nor did he forget the psychological vagary, or poem, Golefield had promised to shew him, illustrative of those geological fancies which on that occasion the "dreamy philosopher" propounded ; but an opportunity was not at the present moment afforded him of speaking about the "said psychology," so he and the bard could merely bow to each other in the greeting of recognition. Salutations also showered on the two "genii" from all quarters.

“Why, hail ! all hail ! the ‘genii of the lake !’” exclaimed the merry Doctor, as he rose and assisted in placing a chair for the distinguished persons that had now joined the circle.

“Why, gentlemen, you are late,” said their host ; “and hungry you must be too.”

While he spoke, he rang the bell, and ordered a second edition of dinner for his two belated guests, which was speedily placed before them, while the conversation continued ; though, before we resume it, we ought to notice that, in the momentary confusion occasioned by the general rise from the table and placing chairs for the returned guests, Mr. Lawton let the card, which had a moment before been the leading topic of interest, drop from his hand on the chair of his next neighbour, who was our hero. For reasons best known to himself, Renmore let the doily which was in his hand fall upon it, and quietly transferred it, unperceived, to his waistcoat pocket. Perhaps, on account of its curiosity, he wished to secure this specimen of Mr. Lawton’s autograph ; for the note of invitation to Blacktarn, which we have heretofore witnessed him as having received, was in Miss Lawton’s handwriting, so that he now saw her father’s for the first time.

Having thus recorded this perhaps not unimportant piece of “by-play” in the drama, we will proceed with the leading dialogue in it, from which

we were thus momentarily constrained to step aside.

"We began to have our qualms concerning you—your hostess and I," resumed Howbiggen. "We fancied some dire accident must have befallen you, eh?" continued Howbiggen. "No bones broken, I hope?—all safe and sound? No awkward fall down a cliff-side, while the wits were wandering in another direction, umph?—no 'kite-flying' of this kind, eh?"

These characteristic interrogatories on the part of their host elicited a smile from the persons to whom they were addressed, as Routhmore replied—

"Accidents! say you. Ay, accidents, and 'moving accidents of flood and field,' too, have befallen us!"

"What? an encounter with witches on the heath? glamours, warlocks—for the country supplies them?" observed Esdaile; "for since you have had no physical accident, I suppose some moral accident of this kind must have befallen you."

"Why, really something of the kind has befallen us," observed Golefield. "We have been, in a word, held spell-bound under the wand of an enchanter; and hence our delay."

"An enchanter!" asked Lawton; "*who* can he be?"

"Ay, pray say!" interposed the facetious Doc-

tor ; “ for I perceive Mr. Lawton is a little jealous of some suspected rival, seeing he is so great a conjuror himself ! ”

And here a chorus of cachinnation followed up the sally of the Doctor, while Golefield answered—

“ Nay, conjuror as our friend Mr. Lawton may be, yet I can’t help thinking we have fallen in with one to whom he must yield. In a word, after seeing Mr. Fenton for some little distance on his way to Lorton, we rambled on, ‘ losing ourselves ’ in lovely lanes, that not less also ‘ lost themselves ’ in woods and wilds, whither they led, till at last we found ourselves on that strange bed of stone beneath the cliffs to the north.”

“ Ay, where I think I had the pleasure of first meeting you, some little time ago ? ” observed Renmore.

“ Indeed, so it was,” replied Golefield, as he proceeded . . . “ Well, this was the haunt which was the ‘ whereabouts ’ of our magician, on whom we soon stumbled ; and that magician or wizard was the ‘ ancient mariner ’—Mike.”

The colour transitorily passed from Renmore’s cheek as the name was mentioned. Certain recollections of the not over-agreeable destinies the strange superstitious old man declared hung over his head, might have occasioned this momentary uneasiness ; however, it passed off, while, with an

air of well-dissembled surprise, and feigned inquiry, he asked—

“I have understood the person you mention is a singular character, and imbued with a thorough conviction of the infallibility of his doctrines of Fatalism. And pray, what was the ‘rite,’ might I ask, by which he held you spell-bound thus long in the magic ring which he described around you?”

“Oh, a singular story, which it would really interest you to hear,” replied Golefield, “about a child that (he will have it) bore a ‘charmed life’”——

“What, *that* story?” hastily observed Renmore, as he involuntarily started.

“Yes; perhaps you have heard it?”

“No, no!—at least, not the one you speak of; but one of a similar character.”

“Well!” interposed Lawton; “and what of the child?—let us hear. I like mightily these odd tales; and don’t know whether I shall not send for the old wizard (as they call him) to Blacktarn, to see how far he eclipses *me*,—eh, Dr. Esdaile?—conjurer though you pronounce me!”

So saying, the good-humoured squire looked at his bantering friend and smiled; while Golefield replied—

“Oh! it is a long story, I can assure you; and you had far better apply to the old mariner himself to recite it; for none but himself can do it

justice. You ought, indeed, to hear him, Colonel Renmore. He is a perfect character, and one of the 'curiosities' of this spot. As for the story about the child," he continued, turning to Lawton, "he takes it through a 'sea' (literally) of adventure; in all which peril it is saved for some future doom, that the narrator hints is in fearful waiting for it, according to the decree of its destinies. What remark think you I made, when I asked him what had become of this 'charmed babe?'". . .

"Nay; we are not such conjurors as to be able to tell," replied Esdaile.

"Why, I said, now, if Hatfield had been this 'imp of destiny'—this charmed infant,—why then, I could have placed a greater degree of reliance on the authenticity of so singular and strange a narrative. What say you, Colonel Renmore?"

"Yes; true, true!—assuredly! And what reply did he make?"

"Why, I declare he almost made me believe that Hatfield *was* the being his tale had in contemplation, for he answered only by evasions, and at length was perfectly silent!"

"Indeed! well, that is singular," observed Renmore, disguising his feelings, whatever they might have been, by the smile which, however well he was able generally to assume, for some reason or other he found it difficult to call up at the present moment.

“I must hear him, indeed,” he exclaimed. “A singular circumstance.”

But he was relieved here of any secret embarrassment of which he might be conscious, by the motion of their host to adjourn to the drawing-room “and join the ladies.”

“Yes; and the music, too, which I hear, challenges us to meet its summons,” added Esdaile, with true epicurean zest.

Accordingly, everybody rose from his seat, happy to accede to Mr. Howbiggen’s proposal, and proceeded at once towards the drawing-room.

“Charmingly the melodist plays,” observed Renmore to Mr. Lawton, “whoever she is !”

“Ah! that is my daughter,—that is Laura, I fancy.”

“Nay, then,” replied Renmore, in his accustomed style of gallantry, “let us lose no time in approaching the sphere of so much harmony. Here is indeed an enchantress it is agreeable to approach, and whose spells I would gladly meet in preference to those of fifty such magicians as old Mike, of whom we were just now talking.”

“On my word, Colonel, you are too good. You speak too kindly of my poor girl,” exclaimed the honest lord of Blacktarn, in innocent exultation at the homage offered his daughter’s acquirements; while Golefield, who overheard this remark

of our hero's gallantry, observed to him—"Ay, Colonel, but who knows?—these harmonious spells we are about to feel the effect of, may, after all, be more dangerous and difficult to escape from than the more solemn ones of even old Mike."

Renmore smiled in acquiescence; while he thought to himself—"Are they so?" as he asked the question of his heart. What its reply might be we think we could interpret, when we remember the affections that swayed it in another quarter. But really the human heart is such a riddle that we must "bide" awhile before we can fully pronounce on the subject. Suffice it, at present, to say, that the harmonious challenge that had already summoned all to do homage to it, lost none of its force or effect, as they now made their entrance into the musical shrine whence it proceeded—the drawing-room.

CHAPTER III.

“Till the dilating soul, enrapt, transfus’d,
Into the mighty vision passing—there,
As in her natural form, swell’d vast to heav’n !”

COLERIDGE.

THE hissings of a portentous urn, about the size of a cenotaph, (the “fashion of the day,”) blent their murmurs with the harmonies of Laura Lawton’s performance on the piano-forte. Before the urn was seated, in all due dignity, the fair hostess, Miss Howbiggen, doing the honours of the evening tea-table, in a style that would have drawn forth an episode from the author of the “Task” and the “Sofa,” whose bland and domestic muse first immortalized “the cups that cheer, but not inebriate.”

“So you have found your way back to us at last, gentlemen?” said Miss Howbiggen, as Golefield and Routhmore approached to apologize to their hostess for their unusual lateness. While they were seated near her, amusing her with their ad-

ventures, and gratifying her very "attic" propensity for hearing anything in the shape of "intelligence,"—(or, as Mr. Howbiggen less ceremoniously termed it, "gossip,")—our hero advanced to the piano-forte, accompanied by Mr. Lawton.

Dr. Esdaile, meantime, and his host took up the cudgels of argument again between each other, as was usual when they met, with little chance of either of them convincing the other; the Doctor, however, occasionally breaking off from the defence of his "system," or *code de santé*, to look round towards the piano and ejaculate his praises of Miss Lawton's performance. When we say Miss Lawton's performance, we ought to add that it was now aided by our hero, who accompanied her with his voice, and not only "made himself useful" in turning over the leaves of her music-book, but yet more, after first of all accompanying her in a "solo" piece, he sang a duet with her.

The portentous approbation of Mr. Lawton greeted the first performance with a "bravo," and the second with a "bravo bravissimo;" and not a little pleased was the worthy Blacktarn squire to find that his daughter's accomplishments had at length found some one who so eminently aided in their due exhibition. And really he might well congratulate himself on this circumstance, for (if we except the instance of Esdaile and the "Genii") anything

like harmony was lost on the Howbiggen party; for Miss Howbiggen did "not play," and Mr. Howbiggen had "no ear whatever" for music. Nay, he was so atrociously disqualified in his tastes, and so insensible to the charm of music, that, like Doctor Johnson, he never heard a piece of "difficult" execution, without from his soul wishing it were "impossible," as the happiest climax to its perplexity.

It may be imagined that the acquaintance which had improved so well during the conversation between our hero and the heiress of Blacktarn during dinner, was not a little strengthened by this link of harmony by which they were now held together, like two beads strung on one thread. Mr. Lawton, who "doted" on his daughter, (to use Miss Howbiggen's expression,) and was no less proud also of her acquirements, was tacitly in raptures at the thought that his daughter's talent would no longer be buried and lost for want of the presence of any one capable of appreciating it, and drawing it out. For since Blacktarn was a very out-of-the-way place, and in consequence of floods from the hills, at times also inaccessible, the society of the Lawtons, together with the opportunities for it, was very limited. It is true that the "Genii of the Lake" occasionally wandered up to see them, but their visits were like those of angels, "few and

far between;" and consequently, though they had both taste and feeling to appreciate any acquirements the fair "heiress" might display, yet the occasions when she was called on to exhibit them were necessarily very scarce and limited. Mr. Lawton, therefore, with a "providence" on which he piqued himself, was determined, now he had caught this "*rara avis*" of a Colonel,—all accomplished, polished, and amiable as he was,—to make the most of him, and invite him to Blacktarn for a short period. Possibly the thought might come across him, that an acquaintance begun so agreeably—matured so happily—might end in a yet more "interesting" bond than that of mere acquaintance. The Colonel was of noble family, of fair possessions (no doubt) in the county of Caithness,—(for so Mr. Lawton had learned of Miss Howbiggen,)—who knows, then, thought he, but that the quarters of the "Hon. Colonel Renmore, M.P., of Clan-renmore, county Caithness," might eventually be fixed in the domain that recognised the fair heiress of Blacktarn as its mistress? . . . Congenial tastes, fortune on both sides, good connexion, *et cetera et cetera*!

All these considerations, we say, thronged in rapid succession on the mind of the "provident" father; and the evening having now been brought thus harmoniously to its termination, and our hero

and his fair musical partner having retired from the piano, the former was about now to take his leave.

“ You must positively lose no time, Colonel Renmore, in giving us the pleasure of your company for a few days at Blacktarn,” said Mr. Lawton, extending his hand to our hero, in the ceremony of leave-taking. “ I have some important alterations going on, upon which I should particularly like to have the opinion of a man of taste like yourself. Laura and myself will be delighted to do the honours of Blacktarn, whenever you can make it convenient to come and see us.”

Laura acquiesced with a laudable obedience to her sire's hospitable wishes, as a blush (not unperceived by Miss Howbiggen) rose transiently in her cheek. Nor did our hero refuse them the pleasurable anticipation of his company, as he expressed “ that he should feel much flattered, indeed, in paying his respects.” Accordingly, it was understood that he was to pay Blacktarn a visit in a day or two. This invitation was not, however, the only testimony of homage offered to his agreeable qualifications and society, for the little Doctor started up and said—

“ Ay; and mind, Colonel, before you leave this region of wonders, that I have not yet introduced you to the whole conclave of my ‘ Genii of

the Lake.' We agreed, I think, on our first little fishing excursion together, to take another in the direction of Windermere, where I must introduce you to the poet of Nature herself, my friend Woodsland."

"Nay; and you must come over to Keswick and see us, too," added Golefield and Routhmore, almost at the same time; while Miss Howbiggen, not willing to be behind-hand, and anxious to have the "distinguished stranger" under her roof no less than her "fair rival," (as we had almost said,) the heiress of Blacktarn, exclaimed—

"And I wish, Colonel Renmore, whilst you are at Buttermere, you would condescend to make our house your home."

"How am I to answer to so much kindness showered on me on all sides at once?" replied our hero, smiling; "you overwhelm me, I may truly say, with so much goodness."

"Ay, to be sure," interposed the merry little Doctor; "one at a time—one at a time! we press too thickly on Colonel Renmore. Well, then, it is understood between us, Colonel, we are to pay a visit to Woodsland together?"

"I shall be delighted," was the reply.

"And you will not forget *us*?" asked Golefield, speaking for himself and his brother genius of Keswick.

“Most happy, if it is in my power——”

“And, Colonel Renmore, am I to have the pleasu”

. . . . But here our hero had, fortunately for him, made his retreat before Miss Howbiggen had repeated her invitation; while her amiable brother observed, in his peculiar style—

“Ugh! no doubt he is glad to get away; I’m sure I should have been so, under such a volley of civilities!”

“*You*, Mr. Howbiggen,” observed his more sociable sister; “perhaps *you* might; but, fortunately, we all do not make precisely the same estimate as yourself of feelings both sociable and praiseworthy.”

“True, true,” observed Dr. Esdaile; “but,” (lowering his voice, he added,) “this is only Mr. Howbiggen’s ‘way’ of speaking; he does not mean anything ill-natured or dissocial.”

So saying, the Doctor followed the example of our hero, and took his leave, accompanied by Golefield and Routhmore, on their way back, all three of them, to Keswick. Scarcely had they taken their leave, than the servant announced that Mr. Lawton’s carriage was at the door; and this worthy, together with his daughter, having accordingly obeyed the summons to depart, their host and hostess were now left to themselves.

Miss Howbiggen's impatience to express her sentiments of her distinguished guest as fully as she should wish, gave itself immediate vent in an enumeration of all those qualifications which so deservedly had won her admiration, together with that, indeed, of all who had been of the late party. "The Colonel's elegance!—the Colonel's eloquence!—the Colonel's handsome countenance!—the Colonel's distinguished appearance!—the Colonel's family!—the Colonel's information!—the Colonel's voice!—his talent for music!—his delightful conversation!—his property, too, in Caithness!" all were reiterated in the apparently interminable catalogue which Miss Howbiggen drew up of his many and varied endowments, both of mind, person, and fortune.

"Oh Lord! oh Lord! have you not yet finished dinning that fellow's name in my ears?" exclaimed her less enraptured brother, losing all patience at the enumeration of such endless virtues. "This fellow has quite turned your head! and that babyish girl's too—that Laura Lawton's,—I've no doubt, with his singing and prating! Oh, good heavens! I'm sick of the whole set of them,—that solemn blockhead, Lawton, her father, and that bore of a Doctor, with his two 'romance-mongers,' who, after all, are the best of the set!—ugh—tired out of my life!"

So saying, Mr. Howbiggen seized a candlestick, and hobbled off to bed as fast as he could, nothing heedful as to the bland and wholesome objurgation which it fell to the lot of Miss Howbiggen to administer. One remark, however, which had escaped him, made more impression on this fair person's mind than any other; and it was that in which the heiress of Blacktarn's name had been recited. What the character of any such impression might be may be best judged from her own words, as she said to herself, "Pooh! a babyish girl, indeed!—there is little in her. I dare say Colonel Renmore only sung to amuse her, just as he would shake a coral and bells to please a child; not that he felt any particular interest in her. Now, his attentions to *me*, I cannot help feeling, were most marked."

And thus, with a varied train of speculations, in which the self-love of the good spinster made itself pre-eminently conspicuous, she, after taking an approving side glance of herself in the long looking-glass that decorated the wall, retired to her "couch," no doubt to enjoy "rosy dreams," whose blush, perchance, might have won its tint from images of the Colonel's red coat.

Mr. Lawton, meanwhile, and Laura were on their way towards Blacktarn, and it may be supposed that the topic of their conversation was the

all-engrossing one also of "the Colonel;" and no less so than has been witnessed in the instance of the estimable Miss Howbiggen.

"Hah! vastly agreeable, well-informed, and clever person!—vastly so!" observed Mr. Lawton, in his usual oracular way. . . . "Shall have great pleasure in shewing him all our improvements at Blacktarn,—vastly agreeable person!"

"Very much so, indeed, papa—very distinguished;" and had the light been a little stronger, the blush that rose in her cheek as she responded to this testimony of our hero's merits might possibly not have escaped her sagacious "papa's" observation.

"That duet between you was well managed," continued Mr. Lawton. "I did not think you could sing so well, my love,—never heard you in better voice, nor did you ever look better either—was much pleased—(ahem!)—much pleased!"

It was not impossible that Laura's conscience might have whispered that she had never yet been sensible of so worthy a claim upon her interest, in exerting herself to render her performance effective, as on the occasion in question. Whether this were the case or not, we cannot pretend to determine, nor are we quite sure what might have been the reply she would have made to Mr. Lawton's commendations of her. Possibly, "that he was mistaken in giving her more praise than was her

due ;"—possibly, "that when there are two voices aiding one another, more effect is necessarily produced than where the unsustained efforts of a single one exists."

But, whatever her reply might have been, it was destined to be cut short, and her attention diverted into another channel, by seeing the figure of a man standing on the edge of the precipice which overhung the road, and to which she called her good sire's notice. But as we are likely to learn little concerning this person, whoever he might be, from Mr. Lawton, (conjurer, notwithstanding, as Dr. Esdaile pronounced him to be,) we will let the Blacktarn carriage drive forward on its homeward way, and climb up the steep, to gratify our curiosity in learning who the person could be that had attracted the attention of the Lawtons, and who had been seen by them from the carriage but dimly at the distance at which he stood, though the night was a beautiful and clear one.

It was, indeed, a serene and starlight night, fraught with themes for "heavenly mystic musings" in the minds of those who had an imagination to frame, and a spirit to penetrate, the secrets which the voice of night whispers. The philosopher would listen to that tranquillizing whisper, to hear it wean him to musings far from a world of passion, and the sordid strife of life. The devout man

would contemplate those starry luminaries to witness in their boundlessness and splendour the wonderwork of infinite Wisdom, and join in the praise which their high harmonies poured in celebration of it. The metaphysician would seek to soar above the earth-ball on which his impatient spirit-wing was confined, and spring upward to scan those bright worlds, and read the tale of habitation, of life, of mortal or spiritual abode, that they represented. One while, perchance, he might deem, with earlier speculators, that those star-worlds were the resting-places and high haunts of happy departed souls from this earth sod; at another, he might amuse himself with deeming them the paradises of happy essences belonging to an angel or Peri world; at another, again, he might, as the most probable speculation, view in them but an infinite reflection of the tale of life, of human hopes and fears — of existence sprung from nothingness and ending in obscurity,—the fretful scene of worldlings, flatterers, and enthusiasts; the vain, the ambitious—the weak, and the strong; the victims of despair—and the laurel-crowned victors too, in the various race of fame—bards, warriors, and sages.

Such might, haply, have been the musings of the person before us; such, in succession, might have been his speculations, and more especially the last-mentioned feature of them appears to have been

acceptable to his character of mind, as he broke from the silence in which he had for some little time stood, perusing the splendid volume of those starry heavens, and spoke as though he had arrived at the conclusion drawn from the sublime lesson he read in it.

It was not on the long-mooted speculation and fond reverie of whether the worlds above him were inhabited or not, that the contemplations of our philosopher were engaged; but granting this, the theme his speculations pursued was, "what was the sublime deduction to be drawn from a review of such a sea—such an *infinity* of human scenes of action and ambition;" and these speculations appeared to be those of a young poet analysing the subject of his own aspirations. To express this deduction, then, it was, that his thoughts found a tongue, as he exclaimed—"And what is the loftiest topic which a mind of ardent aspiration can engage it on most fondly? The darling dream of fame?" (So spoke the young poet.) "Alas! that guerdon of immortality—that hope of a consciousness after death of the glory that shall consecrate the name we leave behind us—what is their worth? what their extent? . . . It is to learn the truth conveyed in this—perchance mortifying—lesson that I look on yonder golden, glowing, and infinite volume outspread through Space before me. To *me*, that

volume unfolds the page of Truth. Beauteous as sublime to contemplate,—yet stern, too, in its sublimity if conned aright,—it conveys to worldlings that hug themselves in the dream of earthly renown—but despair ! Though indeed they are safe from this trial, unwilling alike and unable to extend their minds or raise their imaginations to read what I now read. . . . Ye ‘starry-spangled’ heavens, whisper ye not a truth that will make the proudest of earth’s ‘victors’ and ‘names’ dwindle into nothingness ? Tell me, (if indeed you are but worlds like this in which I breathe—namely, scenes of human strife and ambition)—declare, how *manifold* will be the spirits of those who were mighty in your respective earthly spheres, and who will meet the spirits too of this earth in that ‘Hereafter,’ where *all* departed souls shall meet,—that ‘eternal after-state’, in which the ‘consciousness of the name they have left behind them’ constitutes what we call immortality ;—declare this, for the sake of that deduction I am about to draw from thence ! Say, what myriads, what countless myriads, of fame’s deputies will the boundless conclave of worlds on worlds send laurel-wreathed to that after-state, to lull themselves in dreams of the immortal guerdon they have won. Yes ! and mark, now, the conclusion that must ensue. The individual treasure of fame—the guerdon being thus vastly and infinitely *multiplied*

—is merged in its very infinitude ! What becomes of its price, the price of its rarity, as regards an individual scene of ambition ? It is lost in the infinity of its amount, thus endlessly swelled by the hosts of Fame's minions sent forth by the hosts of worlds too that throng the universal bound ! The Homers, the Shakspeares, the Voltaires, the Cæsars, the Platos, the Napoleons, which we boast as so mighty, because so rare—how will they be obliged to own that the high price that man and themselves had set on them is lost, when they see themselves reflected in the countless host of bards, of sages, of warriors—of Cæsars, and Homers, and Platos, whose spirits come smiling to the shadowy 'after world,' soothed in the dream that they have built up names that are remembered in the scenes they have left ! This 'Consciousness, which alone can constitute immortality,—how must its self-love be diminished, mocked, and crushed in the reflection that, after all, its 'immortality' is confined to one poor speck in the universe ! While the next thought is, that if, indeed, it were not so confined, yet that there are such countless hosts who share it, that its rarity—(which was all that made it worth boasting of)—is merged—annihilated—and itself little worth the toil that sought it !" . . . He paused awhile, when, in conclusion, he added, " Stern lesson from a lovely volume ! Be it trea-

sured in my heart to learn from it, the mere vanity of ambition, my own nothingness, and, yet more, the universal nothingness of fame, so panted for by man !”

“ And, upon my word, a most sublime as well as just conclusion to arrive at, Mister ‘ Mystic,’ Metaphysician, Star-gazer, or ‘ *quocunque nomine gaudes* !’ ” exclaimed the facetious Dr. Esdaile, (for it was no other than he,) that had come unawares upon our metaphysician, or, as the Greeks called it, “ theóros,” during the very characteristic utterance, of the speculations we have just heard him express.*

“ Ah ! what, you have found me out,” answered Golefield, smiling; for it was himself to whom we have been listening.

“ Found you out !” rejoined Esdaile; “ ay, and I wish it might be to bring you back to yourself; for I’m inclined to think you have been lost in the sea of speculation on which you have just been launching. Come, it grows late; let us make the best of our way on towards Keswick.”

So saying, Esdaile led the way back from the cliff where Golefield had wandered, to the road where Routhmore was waiting for him. It should seem that as the whole three, being invited by the beauty and serenity of the night, had proceeded

* See note, Appendix, vol. ii.

on their starlight ramble from Mr. Howbiggen's, Golefield had loitered behind at a particular point of view, to indulge in his survey of so lovely a firmament, no less than in the speculations it suggested. Esdaile, however, finding he did not come onward with himself and Routhmore, bethought him of stepping back to rally the "metaphysical dreamer," and bring him back at once to them, and to himself too, as we have witnessed.

So the whole "trio" now proceeded on their way again towards Keswick, the Doctor taking good care not to let his fancy-loving friend lag behind to indulge in any more dreams; considering wisely that it would be time enough for him to dream when he had ensconced himself in that most appropriate realm of dreams — his bed! The Doctor was, of course, not sparing of his raillery, as he observed on the conclusion to which his friend's speculations had led him — "Despite all the sublimity of your flight, I do not envy you the bright lesson you have been borrowing from that starry volume; so you may keep your deductions of Truth to yourself. I do not want to be 'metaphysicked' out of my self-love. Be assured, happiness dwells more in Delusion than Truth!"

"Well, well," replied the benign speculator, "to please you, I will content myself with feeling that if my dreaming may possibly be little adaptable to the

tastes—may little win the sympathies, or influence the sentiments of men, that at least I have won peace of mind for myself. This is no mean achievement of philosophy. However difficult, again, the lesson you dissent from may be to pursue, yet it is not the less ‘truth.’ I am satisfied with the possession of knowing what truth is, and deriving the benefit it alone can afford.” So saying, the simple-minded philosopher remained silent; while his friend Routhmore rebutted somewhat more vigorously the proposition of the Doctor, as he said—

“Why, yes, with weak and vain minds, ‘delusion’ may indeed be happiness, and the only happiness. But not so with minds that have strength enough to meet the somewhat repulsive lesson of ‘Knowing themselves.’”

Thus conversing, our trio proceeded on their romantic and lovely way, which won a new charm from the tranquil beauties in which so radiant a heaven had invested it, as flood and hill-top, sparkling rill and woods hanging over the slope above them, shone far and wide in the silvery lustre. So, bidding them each and all a “good night,” we shall return to our hero, and place ourselves by his side once more, as he took his way from Howbiggen’s along the meer bank, to his quarters at the village.

So much an object of interest as he had been

to the persons (especially to the fairer portion of them) whom he had just met, perhaps it may be asked whether that interest was in any way repaid or reciprocated by himself? Nor let him be accused of want of gallantry, even towards the gentle and fair heiress of Blacktarn, if we are obliged to confess for him that he felt no depth of interest (at least, such as that which implies tenderness or sentiment) at all! How could he, when the thought of Gertrude returned more dearly to him than that of any other living thing or subject, the moment he was again left to himself and his own meditations? The attentions he had shewn to any lady he had that evening met in society were such as he considered were uniformly due from him, as from every gentleman (who has any power of making himself agreeable), to any and every fair person he may chance to meet in the circles in which he moves. If idle and mistaken constructions are placed by others on such attentions, and an importance and a meaning attached to them which they were never intended to possess, those only are to be blamed who create such misconstructions; and if they should find themselves mistaken, they have themselves alone to thank for their rashness. Such are the considerations that suggest themselves in answering the question we had raised for the reader's interest; but as regards our hero, no such

thoughts for a moment occupied his mind, which was (as we have already testified to his honour) solely directed to the prevailing dream that cheered his existence—the thought of Gertrude.

With her image, then, before him, he made his way along the border of the meer, wishing, as he looked upon its silver-tinted sheen of beauty, that he had her by his side to look on it together with him, and enhance the pleasure he derived from the realm of loveliness around. When, lo! as he was thus waking up her image to relieve the solitude—as his thoughts were thus winning charm in a recurrence to her—strange as unexpected coincidence, a light figure skimmed across his path some little distance in advance of him, just as he had now diverged from the border of the meer into the road or lane that led to the village.

As well as the light permitted him to discern the figure, it was her own—it was Gertrude! But yet more was there reason for his attention being, and not very pleasantly either, excited; for not only was it occupied on the surprise occasioned by witnessing the lighter and more elegant figure already mentioned, but on the appearance of another form also, which though less distinctly traced, as standing more in the shadow of the bank-side, was recognised as that of somebody of the other sex.

The blood for a moment forsook Renmore's

cheek, which became pale as the dim and dewy sod on which he stood. But a moment more sufficed to banish all surmises unworthy of Gertrude's fidelity to himself, or that, in less generous or confiding bosoms than his own, would have whispered the busy tale of jealous apprehension. Whoever the person was in whose company Gertrude (if indeed it was Gertrude) had been, he had now left the spot, nor was traceable by our hero on his coming up to it, to clear away the doubt that hung round the circumstance of his surprise. The sound indeed of wheels was heard rapidly proceeding along, in the direction that led away from Buttermere; but this circumstance little assisted in relieving Renmore's doubts.

“ Good heavens ! it could not have been Quandish's figure. Impossible ! and yet it was not altogether unlike. After all, it might not have been Gertrude that I saw, — the light, uncertain as it is, may have deceived me. No,” he added, in a more impassioned tone; “ it is impossible that I could mistake for any other than her own that airy form of grace and beauty which, fawn-like, skimmed across yonder night-glade, nor shook one trembling pearl-dew from the grass.”

So spoke the language of the lover, as thus communing with himself, and thus perplexed, he regained the hostelry of the Traveller's Rest.

CHAPTER IV.

“*Lydia*. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

“*Mrs. M.* What business have you, miss, with preference and aversion? It is safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion. Take yourself to your room.”

RIVALS.

IF Renmore fancied that he had seen Quandish in the person that quitted Gertrude's side, his surmises to that effect seemed now confirmed; for on his approaching the porchway, he perceived by the light of the candle that shone from the window of dame Wetherby's "sanctum," the effigies of this very being, whom he concluded, accordingly, had joined dame Wetherby, in order to relate, possibly, the success of his interview.

Whether such a surmise was justly or mistakenly entertained, we will not stop at the present moment to consider, though the latter alternative seems

more probable. Be this, however, as it may, Renmore shrunk back on seeing an object so obnoxious to him; and not desiring to be again brought in contact with him, if it could be helped, he desisted from entering the inn. Retiring from near the porchway, he turned again towards the meer border, in order to fill up the time until Quandish should have rid the hostelry of his disgusting presence. "It is that fellow!" exclaimed Renmore on first perceiving him; "I will prolong my walk till he is gone. So I suppose he is still harping on Gertrude's obduracy;—or possibly he may have teased her into uttering something that he has construed into encouragement. At any rate, he is closeted with dame Wetherby as usual, and of course his suit with Gertrude is the theme of their conversation. I take it, it is but a losing game after all that he pursues—the poor dullard!—he fancies he is surprisingly cunning in having won the mother on his side, and as a promoter of his suit. He had better have won the daughter. I wonder if it was really he whom I saw just now quit her. Pooh! if it was, what matters it? He is as far as ever from rendering himself acceptable to her. She may have said, perhaps, an encouraging word to get rid of him; meantime, he is plying his suit with the weak, bigoted woman, her mother, stupidly eager to make her press upon her daughter an encourage-

ment of his addresses. Blockhead ! he is like many others I have known, who ‘begin at the wrong end’ in a courtship—who begin with the ‘approbation of the parents.’ Pshaw ! the way is, to win the affections of the fair object herself first of all, and then leave the battle to *her*, to win over the parents to acquiesce in the circumstance ‘on which their daughter’s happiness depends’—ha ! ha !”

Renmore laughed scornfully as he contrasted with conscious triumph his own superior knowledge of the human heart to that of his rival in winning the object of their mutual endeavours. “Now, a blunderer,” he continued, “or a shy being in matters delicate as this, having few qualities perhaps to make themselves acceptable to the daughter, will fortify themselves (they imagine) in gaining the parents on *heir* side. They will find, in nine cases out of ten, I fancy, that the old adage of placing ‘the cart before the horse’ is verified in the instance of their clumsy and impolitic courtship. So, all venturous suitors, be admonished by me !—gain first of all the mastery of the fair creature’s heart and mind whom you would win,—be it for her charms, or her fortune, or both,—and you will then have an ally in herself, that, however much the parents may be disinclined towards you, will win you the victory over them in the end. But stop,” he continued, checking himself in the words which had

been elicited by his scorn for a being so much beneath him as Quandish in any attribute that can render a man acceptable in the eyes of others. "Stop! though the sentiments I have uttered may be, generally speaking, true, yet is my scorn for this fellow unalloyed by any apprehension that Gertrude may perhaps be as little mine as his? For if it was not this Simmonds, or Quandish, (or whatever he may call himself,) that I saw take leave of her just now, it was still some one perhaps more happy in her affections than I can reckon myself. Yet I can scarcely believe this, if I have been able to calculate aright on the ascendancy I think I have won over her mind and heart. Yes; I know—I cannot doubt that she loves me. How many little things have shewn it. When has her foot of late mounted the hill-slope but it was sure to wander where mine met it?—and then the blush—the smile—the 'delightful confusion' when we met—and that mutual chord of feeling, too, between us—my affection (though *he* knows it not) for Fenton. Her look has thanked me as I spoke of him thus kindly,—thanked me from her heart,—thanked me with the tear that would furtive glisten in her eye,—thanked me with her gratitude—with her esteem—her confidence—her love."

Such was the train of musings in which Renmore's mind was led, as he paced along the brink

of those silver-glistening waters of the moonlight lake. He came at length to the rock overhanging the cave where we remember Mike had moored his shallop, after rowing the "venerable stranger" thither, concerning whom the curiosity of Golefield and his friend had been awakened. Here he sate down, his eye dreaming on the dim as lovely expanse of waters, and his heart pursuing a dream as dim, though haply less beautiful, in the various train of thoughts in which his mind was now led.

The spot at once waked up the image of old Mike, together with that look of significance with which he had accompanied all he imparted to him, whether as regarded past or future destinies. With the first was, somehow or other, connected the thought of the good curate of Lorton; though it must be left to time to disclose what could be the link that bound the circumstances of Mike's narrative, or its subject, with the name of Fenton.

How many painful associations arise in the mind from the mere accident of a single untoward circumstance affecting the heart or spirits! Such is the remark suggested to us by witnessing the "change" that had thus suddenly come over the "spirit" of Renmore's dream. But a little while ago, at the Howbiggen party, he was comparatively happy—his mind at ease—his turmoil of spirit

lulled. But this sudden circumstance concerning Gertrude, which he had witnessed on his return to the hostelry, had been sufficient to embitter the tone of his feelings, and damp his more pleasurable dream.

Such is the constitution of the human mind, that seldom is it that one troublous or displeasing thought is awakened without its being followed by a host of others. And if this is witnessed as almost universally the case in analyzing our human composition, it is more especially so where (as in the instance of Renmore) the mind has been but transitorily basking in the gleam of content or pleasure, and makes its abode more readily, because more necessarily, with pain than with happiness.

All we are saying is but an illustration of the humble adage, "misfortunes never come alone." The converse, indeed, is often equally true, that fortune "rains" her favours on us. A spark of pleasure lit up by a cheerful sunbeam, for instance, that rejoices the heart no less than the eye, often kindles a whole train of happy associations. But however smoothly the dream of joy may wing it on its bright course, it is a thing of such caprice, so unstable and so mutable, that let but the least hindrance occur to check it, and it is precipitated down the abyss of care, along whose giddy edge it disported. What little obstacles, (for example,) as

petty as unforeseen, have occurred to mar the ardent race of success, of ambition, of prosperity, of pleasure ! Like the hindrance of a mere pebble to one of those rapid engines that modern invention has called into use, as it glows and hurries on its level track—on it urges, ardent as rapid, in its strength,—a moment more—a crash—a shriek of those whom it whirls with it—its race is checked—its pride and strength are overthrown,—it is precipitated over the steep, and peace and life are sacrificed with it. What was the “let,” or obstacle, to its smooth, and as yet unimpeded career ? a poor, paltry pebble, flung in mere wanton carelessness by some idle boy as he ran whistling past, satchel in hand, to school.

Thus was Renmore’s mind swayed with many turbid, many tender thoughts. And who can doubt that he loved with sincerity, when his uneasiness at witnessing the object of his affections in the companionship of some one else is considered ? But he had now returned to the hostelrie ; and as he approached the door, he saw through the dim and dubious light a form emerge from the porch and wend its way onward to the village.

“What !” he exclaimed ; “has his conference with dame Wetherby but just closed ? Has this Quandish been unwilling to take his leave till now ? Well ! Gertrude—unless she has become

more disposed to listen to him—must expect to meet still more remonstrance, and recommendation in his behalf, from her ‘loving’ parent than hitherto, or I am mistaken as to the result of this long closeting of our sanctimonious suitor with her !”

So saying, Renmore entered the hostelry, and proceeded at once to his chamber, as he took up a candlestick that was standing on a mahogany slab by the passage side at the top of the landing-place. As, however, he stood lighting it by another which flamed by its side, he could not avoid overhearing a conversation which it was impossible for him to mistake was being conducted between Mrs. Wetherby and her daughter. He at once concluded what the topic was, and also that Mrs. Wetherby, after having taken leave of the preacher, had sought out the room to which her daughter had retired for the night, and had accordingly “entertained” her with the topic that, we cannot doubt, (in spite of all our hero’s “fond misgivings,”) was of all others the most calculated to mar her repose.

Such were the conjectures of Renmore, who had now lit his candle, and passed onward to the room he occupied. If he had gleaned enough from this parley to know that the pseudo-preacher was still as unacceptable to Gertrude as he had hitherto been, it occurred to him, now, that if he had any rival in her affections, and if such rival were the

person he had witnessed in her company a short time past, yet that it could not be Quandish. It must have been some one else.

Meantime, various and unsettled as his surmises might be on this last point, they gave way for the present to the concern of which he was sensible in Gertrude's behalf, when he reflected on the additional constraint and coercion that had doubtless been just exercised on her feelings as regarded Quandish. His concern was indeed due to the lovely subject of its interest. He well knew that the native independence of her spirit must have sustained a severe conflict with her sense of filial duty in combating any proposition urged by her parent.

In truth, his surmises were just; and we may add, that however deferentially the clearer-sighted girl may have suggested, not only her inability to esteem the preacher, but her misgivings as to the alleged purity of his character, her remonstrance only served to incense her blinder parent, and was regarded as so much dictation. The pique that we may remember dame Wetherby had exhibited that morning, on the subject of Esdaile's remark concerning Gertrude's appearance at church, had no doubt instigated the dame to make her daughter "feel her authority," as she would have expressed it. Accordingly, the unpalatable suit had been urged with more imperativeness than ever, and a speedy compliance with it required. The more

gently the remonstrance of Gertrude was expressed, the more it unfortunately irritated her bigoted and irascible parent, who felt a tacit reproach to herself in the superior calmness and address of her daughter. The suggestion of such a circumstance on the part of Gertrude, as that she, her parent, could possibly be mistaken in the real character of the preacher, or of any one, so much longer as she had lived in the world than her daughter, was above all things, a subject of angry excitement to the sagacious and pious dame.

Mrs. Wetherby may yet have to learn that years do not always confer discretion. Gertrude's very calmness and affection of manner was construed into a spirit of provocation, and as being merely adopted to render her opposition the more vexatious. In fact, as Mrs. Wetherby grew more excited and angry, she was of course less able to listen to reason, or the placid remonstrance of either justice or affection; and it is difficult to say whether Gertrude's chief concern at the termination of this painful and profitless conference was, at being thus unwillingly obliged to differ with her parent and regret her weakness of mind, (for Gertrude forgave her anger in compassion for her blindness,) or to reprobate the being on whose account she had been subjected to so much vexation.

One of the chief beauties of Gertrude's charac-

ter, in which all were so estimable, was her filial love and sense of duty as regarded her parent. She was, in truth, all lovely in mind as in person. She did not exercise opposition towards the unkind and unreasonable constraint attempted to be imposed on her, so much as feel regret that she was obliged to exercise it. Her natural excellence of disposition, even had it not been cultivated and nurtured aright by the guidance of one so virtuous as the curate of Lorton, would have influenced her to feel thus. But she felt that no law of paternal control could force her into resigning the exercise of her reason and judgment, to say nothing of her tastes or affections; and both reason and judgment condemned and detected, by a secret whispering too strong to be controlled or silenced, the pseudo-preacher. There was a malice in his smile, a design in his countenance, in which she could not be mistaken. "He must be a bad man," she thought, "who can harbour malice or design, and both are too strongly written on his brooding, discontented brow to be misinterpreted."

Female fear alone would have been a sufficient excuse, she felt, for repudiating such a man. But all her misgivings, all her unwilling resistance to the demands made on her, won countenance in her mind from the feeling that not Fenton himself would reprove her for acting in opposition to her parent,

when her resistance was thus conscientiously dictated. For she exercised it not only in her own behalf, but because she thought it due to her parent's essential happiness that she should be spared the future regret of having sacrificed her child to one who was unworthy of her, though that parent was too much blinded to be alive to the arts practised on her.

Strengthened and fortified with these reflections, with the consciousness she was acting rightly, and that Fenton—the best and wisest of men she had ever known—would deem her justified in a gentle yet firm resistance to the wrong done her parent no less than herself, Gertrude, when alone and in the silence of her chamber, which her mother had now left, poured forth her spirit to the Power that supports the weakest,—that vindicates, sooner or later, the cause of assailed innocence.

This debt being paid, she recurred to thoughts which her heart more happily contemplated. She recurred to her love for Renmore, and no less to the consideration that he was indeed a being worthy to be loved. And was she wrong in drawing that conclusion? How much had his heart and mind been laid open to her ; and what had she witnessed there that was not exalted, noble, and benevolent? If such a man were bad or criminal by circumstance, yet he never could have been so by nature. Whatever his errors might have been, look but in

his countenance—hear him but express the dictate of his heart and spirit, and you “would forget them all,” as the poet says. It was a testimony even in favour of his being naturally good, and naturally inclined to appreciate what is good—his love for herself. Did the pseudo-preacher love her? Not he! His base and sordid spirit was incapable of any sentiment so exalted, so praiseworthy.

How forcibly is the consideration suggested to us, then,—though it too often escapes that of the world,—that man may be “guilty” without being naturally a villain. Yet the world—the reckless, half-judging, indiscriminating, and unfeeling world—too often condemns a man wholly where he is only partially guilty;—too often deems the guilt which is induced by his misfortune to be the crime also of his nature!

Had Renmore known all that thus passed in her mind as regarded the tribute it paid to himself, he would have slept happily, and been lulled in dreams the brightest. But his conjectures relative to the vexation and regret she must be experiencing, in consequence of the late conference with her mother, occupied him too much to permit him to find rest. His head was not more turbidly tossed on his pillow than his heart was disturbed by these considerations on her account; and in which was again afforded a testimony of the sincerity of his attachment for her.

“ Would it were morning,” he exclaimed, “ that I might hasten to her side, and aid in expelling from her mind, or at least diminishing, the uneasiness that besieges it ! I will urge to her the expediency of letting our union be as speedy as possible, that I may remove her at once from this spot, and the disgustful importunity to which she is here subject. We will hasten abroad. And Mike ! you shall accompany us if you will, and own that when I smiled at fate and your forlorn auguries, I cherished confidence not without justice.”

With these thoughts, which took their colour from the ardour and sanguine hope that were natural to our hero's character, the time winged on its way till the rosy dawn had shed its blush on the meer waters. He started from his bed and flung open the casement, challenged by the sun-rays that streamed in through it, and looked hastily out upon the wide glowing scene before him. The restlessness and fever of his mind caught but a momentary sense of the freshening charm respired from without, and the gale that played with his manly dark locks imparted little of its balm to his throbbing heart or brain. His soul was already on the wing to meet Gertrude—to find out Gertrude—to break itself forth in Gertrude's behalf no less than its own.

We need not express that his views as regards her were far from those merely of selfishness. No; the care of self, if it whispered to his conscience, was yet drowned in the louder pleadings of his just affection. Often, as has been heretofore witnessed, had he risen thus early to hasten forth over the hill, where Gertrude was wont to perform her jocund rural task of leading her kine afield. The summons of her cheerful horn, as its melodious echoes wound over the maze of flood and bank, had been the signal to call him forth. But he listened for it now in vain. "I fear all is not well!" he said, as with hasty step and beating heart he hied forth to the slope that overlooked the farm, and in which direction, as we may remember, the lovely herd-mistress was accustomed to drive her kine forth on their daily range.

Leaving Renmore, then, to follow upon her track, we will anticipate him in joining her. Never till the loathed and feared pseudo-preacher had crossed her parent's threshold had she known what it was to feel the pure lively current of her native buoyancy and gladness checked or sullied. It had flowed cheerful and untainted as any silvery rill that poured at her feet from the rock above her, and where her cattle stooped in their wanderings to drink. The new and happier tide of feeling which had arisen in her breast,—taught to

flow, as it had been, by her affection for one so worthy to awaken it as our hero,—had washed away till now the taint her spirit had grieved over, in the check to its happiness afforded by Quandish's distasteful suit. The more than usual determination her parent had evinced on the preceding evening to press it, occasioned her a struggle more painful than she had for some time experienced; for she felt that her fate was coming to some crisis, and that if she were not permitted to find peace or freedom of choice at home, she would be obliged to seek refuge elsewhere. And her thoughts directed them naturally to our hero and Fenton by turns, as those from whom she must seek protection and succour.

Such were the reflections of disquiet and pain which she experienced, and which had no right to intrude on a bosom, pure, guileless, and unoffending as her own. She had, as usual, gone forth on her early matin task, but with step less buoyant, as her heart was less free and light. She had walked silently along on the track of her kine, forgetful to rouse them as usual with the glad challenge of the horn that now hung listlessly by her side. Those joyous waking rays of morn smiled not on her, as wont, to awaken the answer of her smile in return, nor to light up in the bright contagion of their joy her pure and spotless heart. Those sparkling dew-pearls had shone not more

boundlessly around her than erewhile had glowed the wide, unbounded joy of her spirit. Those rosy-tinted dews, like tears wept by roses, glittering over the sward which her light step skimmed—they had shone not more radiant than her bright and happy thoughts. The balm-breath of earth's incense, steamed up in its matin tribute of fragrance from herb and flower, was not fresher than had been but lately the pure glow of her spirit that hailed it. The carol of a thousand feathered songsters around her path over woodland and blossomed mead was not more joyful than the spirit-song her heart used to pour forth in its happiness and health. But her spirit-song was now jarred with discord, and the light on her brow clouded, as she roamed onward with her herd, she heeded not whither; when suddenly a gaunt form strode across her path, as she started and looked to see who it was that rose thus phantom-like before her. It was old Mike, who saluted her somewhat abruptly, as he smiled and said—

“What, how! my fair mistress of the herd! whither are your thoughts wandering? for surely so they are, since you perceive not your cattle have strayed along yonder stony ridge, where nor bird finds seed, nor beast pasturage, nor has living thing a dwelling, save only old Mike in the cell below in the rock-side?”

And here the old mariner began, as he best might, reclaiming the truant kine from their wanderings, while Gertrude, now being recalled to herself, thanked Mike for his kind offices, and wound her horn to the speedy recovery of her herd from their devious rambling.

“And may the old man ask where the lovely herd-mistress’s thoughts might be, that they forgot her favourite care of the poor things whose lowings now answer her signal?”

“Nay, Mike,” replied Gertrude, attempting to assume some of her wonted cheerfulness, “a wizard like yourself needs not to ask that question, since he can (as I’m told) read the thoughts themselves of mankind;” and so saying, she hastened on towards her herd, wishing the old mariner good morning, and thanking him again for helping her to reclaim her cattle that had wandered.

“Well, well!” said the old man, looking after her; “there is doubtless that in thy heart that renders solitude just at present preferable to the company of any one, or rather any but *one*. And yet,” continued the old man, “I have seen her on the hill before now, and accosted her, but have never witnessed her fair brow so clouded, her step so listless, nor her cheerfulness so forced, as this morning. I should not wonder if that hypocrite saint that vexes her with his suit is the cause

of this turmoil to the poor lass. But let him look to it ;—it is enough that she is beloved by one whom this Quandish hates, but who is dear to Mike as though he were his own child. Let him look to it—how he harms the one or the other.”

Thus muttering to himself, the old man strode along towards his cell, pausing a moment on the cliff-brow ere he descended the rude steps in the rock, as he looked back on the track of Gertrude, when he observed two forms instead of one.

“ Ay, I thought so ! When was the Beauty of Buttermere ever left long alone but that gallant there was not by her side ? ” And the old man paused a moment as he stood looking at Gertrude and our hero, for it was himself that had now joined her, until they had turned round the slope and were hidden from him, when he exclaimed, as he hurried down the steps, and at the same time broke from the somewhat painful musing into which he had fallen—“ Poor children ! You are worthy a better fate. Formed for each other, in beauty of mind as of person, no wonder a secret spell has brought you together,—no wonder you love. What shall ye not yet suffer for one another ! Your sufferings as yet are light to what they shall be—to what old Mike would gladly veil from his dream . . . poor girl ! . . . the innocent, the beautiful, to be the sport of such a

sentence ! And *he* too . . . but did I not warn him ? What infatuation was it led him to mock my superstition, as he called it, and point to hope and security, that I fear must never be his. But who can talk to one that loves, with a hope of being listened to ? Did I not warn him, I say, that this frenzy or love would be fatal to him — would prove the rosy clue that should lead him into the trammels he may never escape from ? Innocent and lovely betrayer of him, must you, too, fall into the pit that yawns for him ? I would not think so. I would avert the doom, or at least protract it. I would thwart the enemy, the blood-thirsty Judas, that would wreak his hate now on you both. If I cannot save you eventually,—if I cannot avoid the end,—I may at least aid you for a time ; but for what ? To keep up the mere fallacy of a fond hope. It is but vain—vain after all.”

So saying, the old man descended to his cell, while we, meantime, will return to Gertrude, whom we have witnessed as having been joined by our hero. He had for some time looked for her in vain, since she had wandered so much from her usual track ; but on hearing the notes of her horn awakened on the occasion of Mike’s timely intervention, he had turned his steps in the direction whither they guided him, and had at length come up to her.

All that his conjectures had whispered relative to the conference between herself and her parent on the preceding evening were verified in the disclosure he now obtained from her.

“By heavens, I should not love you!” he exclaimed, passionately, “if I did not counsel you at once to place yourself beyond the reach of this persecution—I can call it nothing else.”

Gertrude looked at him inquiringly, as if to ask what was the course he would suggest, as he continued, scornfully—“the persecution of this *saint*! For who does not know that of all persecution the ‘religious’ is the worst? I, perhaps, know something more of this saint than yourself.”

“Speak!” she replied, earnestly; “tell me what—and confirm my just apprehensions of his dark and dangerous character. I could then convince my mother. I have long surmised this.”

“That is,” replied Renmore, slightly hesitating, “I know *enough* of him to tell you that your apprehensions are far from groundless.”

“Do you know him, then? or have you known anything relative to his history?”

“No, . . . no; I, of course, know nothing of him further than what I have heard, which is merely this—that his sanctimonious character of preacher is a ‘part’ he ‘plays’ for his convenience, and in order to live by the credulity of others. This I

have heard—in fact, not much more than your surmises have conjectured ; but enough to prove them right.”

“ Then you can tell me nothing further than I have already suggested to my mother ? ”

“ Why—that is—no, no ; . . . certainly, I would recommend you to say nothing to her of my having confirmed your ill augury concerning this man. It would only exasperate her further. Your safer and better course is at once to avoid the reach of his importunities, by quitting your parent’s roof, and placing yourself under Mr. Fenton’s care, and eventually under that of myself—your destined husband. Leave it to time to convince Mrs. Wetherby ; nor will it require any very long time to do so, for (mark me !) the moment all hopes of winning you on his part are lost to him, he will at once fling aside the sanctimonious veil under which he has hitherto appeared to her, the better to practise on her credulity, and shew himself in all the naked deformity of his natural ferocity and revengeful character.”

“ Then you do know his character to be this ? ” again inquired Gertrude, earnestly, not altogether without surprise that Renmore did not follow up more decidedly his condemnation of the pseudo-saint.

“ Why, yes,” he replied ; “ I have reason to *think* so,—that is, I have *heard*——”

“ Heard what ? do tell me ! ”

“ My dear love,” resumed Renmore, “ I consider it the part of generosity never to accuse people on mere hearsay ; and I therefore will not degrade myself either in my own or your esteem by asserting what I could not precisely prove. Suffice it to say, I have heard the basest accounts of this man ; be content with this. Be satisfied further, that it is your duty to yourself, to your parent, to myself, let me add, who love you, and to whom you are betrothed, to place yourself beyond the reach of any further importunities of this man.”

The tone of candour with which Renmore had uttered these words, warmed as it was into earnestness for her welfare, and passionate with the spirit of affection, entirely removed from her mind the sense of surprise that the involuntary hesitation of his reply concerning Quandish had occasioned a moment past. He had at the same time taken her hand in his own, as he continued—“ Hesitate not, then, to seek the succour and protection of Mr. Fenton’s roof as a first step, and before our union enables me to remove you with myself.”

“ I have sought this succour ; I have already imparted to him the embarrassment under which I have been placed. It was but yesterday evening I took leave of him——”

“ Then it was Fenton I saw you part from

as I returned from the party at which I had been?"

"Yes, yes; he brought me back from Lorton, where I had passed the day. There was a time when scarcely a week passed without my rambling over the hills to Lorton. Is he not as a father to me? Until lately, until this Quandish has influenced my mother's mind, I had been permitted by her to go to Lorton; but of late——"

... "She has, of course, interdicted your going. But yesterday you took the opportunity of his coming over here to accompany him back on his invitation?"

Gertrude nodded assent, as Renmore proceeded—"And have you confided to him the secret of our attachment? as well as told him of this disgusting hypocrite's pertinacity in seeking you for himself?"

"I have indeed informed him you told a humble village girl you loved her, and——"

... "And did he not believe you?" ...

Gertrude hesitated in a confusion that rendered her yet more beautiful, as the tear and the blush at once spoke the fears and the hopes of love; while Renmore clasped her to his heart as he continued, "Yes; I know all he must have told you—namely, all you have already surmised when I offered you this hand—that the difference of our station in life rendered the sincerity of my avowal

doubtful. There is but one way to convince him ; for you, dearest, you, I trust, place too much reliance on me to doubt me. There is but one way to convince him—that is, for us to hasten to him, to kneel at his feet, implore his blessing before the altar of heaven, and pray him to unite these hands of ours which now clasp each other, in an indissoluble bond. This is but just to yourself,—to the truth of my affection for you. This is the only secure way you have of placing yourself beyond the reach of the embarrassment occasioned you, not more by these distasteful addresses, which render your life fraught with fear and pain, than the blind coercion of a parent that acts more from ignorance than unkindness, as I am willing to believe. Have you strength of mind—have you resolution—to follow this course?—to remove from your parent's roof?—notwithstanding the reproaches that will be showered on you in consequence of such a step, on the part of her mistaken feeling?"

"I have fortitude," replied Gertrude, "to bear all trials, where conscience tells me I am justified, and for one on whom my heart is bestowed." And as she spoke, her expressive and beautiful countenance wore an aspect of mingled resolution and affection, as she answered Renmore's glance, that impressed him with scarcely less awe than love.

"It is enough ; that brief sentence has repaid

me for a world of anxious thought, of painful yet dear solicitude, felt since the first moment I saw you. My dearest, my proudest hope was, then, to call you one day mine. If death itself was to be my unavoidable doom,"—(and here his voice trembled, not more from certain melancholy forebodings that stole over his heart, than the emotion his love for her occasioned,)—"as the bitter balance to that joy I feel in possessing you; yet would I not forego it, if I must also forego the pride, the rapture, which swells my heart in having won you."

Well might the person who had qualifications worthy of engaging the affections, and yet more, winning the heart, of the Beauty of Buttermere,—the idol of universal praise, love, and admiration,—give vent to his feelings as Renmore had. And he was about to proceed to appoint the period of her throwing herself on Fenton's protection, as a first step to his joining her with a view to their union,—when the surprise and dismay of both himself and Gertrude were occasioned by the sudden appearance of two persons, concerning whose intrusion at this moment, together with its results, we must consult our next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

“That is good deceit
Which mars him first that first intends deceit.”

SHAKSPEARE.

DAME WETHERBY had, on the preceding evening, suggested to Quandish that he might step up on the following morning and learn the result of her conference with the “headstrong girl,” as she termed Gertrude. The preacher, nothing loath to obey the summons, did not fail to repair betimes to the hostelrie, and, with a more than usually sanctimonious twang, proceeded to the “sacred” subject of his visit, after having duly inquired concerning the health of the widow Wetherby in the first instance.

“And what comforting words hath my esteemed hostess for her poor servant?” he asked. “Hath she balm—yea, balm even of Gilead—to pour into his wounded spirit? Hath she prevailed with the damsel aught in his behalf? Say not ‘nay.’”

So spoke, or spake as himself would have said,

the saintly Quandish; while dame Wetherby thus “made answer and said,”—giving back twang for twang, and prosiness for cant. They had walked from the hostelrie by the pathway through the fields skirting the dairy attached to the farm premises.

“A ‘wayward spirit!’ a ‘stiff-necked generation!’ good Mr. Quandish, I am sorely grieved to say,—ay, and wise in her own conceit. Alas! well saith the wise king, that a headstrong and vain offspring is a reproach unto its mother. Such is the return for my too much leniency,—my too little restraint of her wayward will. But be of good cheer; a parent’s authority may yet be felt,—yea, be of good cheer.” (Quandish sighed deeply, perhaps weary of Mrs. Wetherby’s “lengthiness,” perhaps out of regret that his suit fared so lamely.) “Nay, let not thy heart fail nor thy spirit be grieved. The stubborn generation, I say again, may yet be brought under the yoke. Verily, she has had too much her own way. Her goings out and her comings in have hitherto been unrestrained. At one time she must needs take it into her head to go over and pay a visit to the Lorton minister, Mr. Fenton.” (The *mock*-dissenter’s face here put on a due grimace of surprise and repugnance.) “At another, she will ramble all alone along the hills to Keswick, or Helvellyn, or where she liketh,—yea, and this freedom and independence, she will

say, 'suiteth' her character, and maketh her life happy! . . . I will soon put a bar across these truancies. Trust me, the 'stiff-necked generation' shall be reclaimed to reason, and a knowledge of what is best for her interests."

The pious Quandish assented to this proposition of using a little gentle restraint, while at the same time he uttered another sigh, — or snort rather through his nose, meant for a sigh, — as he continued, "But believe me, I should grieve to think the damsel was put to any pain on *my* account. You may credit me when I say I love and cherish her in my heart too well to desire to see her happiness (or what she considereth so) abridged. Be not too rigorous. Nay, prithee, treat her fondly, and proceed gently and gradually."

"It will be for her good—for her good. She will thank me for it hereafter. Who knows? it may be saving her from the snares of the ungodly to secure her union to a chosen and blessed worker in the field of salvation."

Yet another sigh, or nasal snort, expressive at once of assent and compunction on the part of the "chosen" preacher, (certainly not "chosen" by Gertrude,) drowned the remainder of the conscientious dame's discourse, while it also served to drown Quandish's secret propensity to laugh at her zeal in the cause of himself and—religion.

“Nay, proceed gently, gently, dear sister Wetherby,” he once again said, looking as sanctimoniously doleful, and awkwardly tender, as any pseudo-saint ever did in venting a piece of hypocritical benevolence. “I once again tell thee, and verily do counsel thee from the bottom of my heart, (where no guile is!) not to be too rigorous with the maiden ; albeit we are told that importunity in the end doeth much ; and ‘knock, and it shall be opened’ is a text that may yet be as balm to our hopes. But, yet again I charge thee, be not harsh with the damsel. Thy too-kindly meant zeal will be ill understood, and only occasion a more determined resistance on her part.”

“The Jezabel!” exclaimed dame Wetherby, forgetting the language of the “saint” in that of the angry no less than weak “sinner.” “The ‘Jezabel!’ she is not a person to be won over by too much leniency ; not she.”

But just at this moment, two forms appeared in sight, at the end of the pathway along which dame Wetherby and the “pseudo-preacher” were concocting their pious plans. The latter started involuntarily as he descried them, and forgot at the moment his sanctimonious character, and its accompanying style of speaking, as he ejaculated in his surprise—

“The *devil!*” . . . when he continued, checking

himself—"Ahem!—I mean, good Mrs. Wetherby, to say that the devil, the enemy of mankind, (ahem!) is ever at work to thwart our good intentions. . . . Dost thou see," he continued, with affected composure, "at the end of yonder green glade, where it meets our pathway, those two figures? Tell me aright, whom takest thou them to be?"

"Why, bless me, if it is not my disobedient daughter walking with the guest at my inn—Colonel Renmore." . . .

. . . "*Colonel Renmore!*" ejaculated Quandish, with a sneering and demoniac laugh.

"Why, is not that his name?" inquired Mrs. Wetherby, mistaking the meaning of his merriment.

"Oh yes, that *is* his name!" replied Quandish,—"and," he added to himself, "*it is not.*" This circumstance, however, he was withheld from avowing, by the consideration (as has been previously explained) that if he on his part had any exposure to make as regarded Renmore, yet that he himself was liable to a similar retaliation. He therefore bridled his tongue, though burning with rage and vexation at the thought which now at once took possession of his mind, at seeing in Renmore the favoured rival of his—not affections indeed—but interested plans as regarded securing "the Beauty" and her fortune.

Of course, Quandish judged of Renmore in this respect by himself. He could not imagine, knowing our hero's exigencies, that he had anything but interested views at heart as regarded Gertrude. He would have mocked at the idea of that deep and real affection Renmore entertained for her—a sentiment of which the grovelling spirit of the pseudo-saint was incapable. The conviction at once flashed upon his mind, that Renmore was the person to whom Gertrude's faith had been plighted. He knew well the immeasurable superiority of qualifications, both of manner and person, as compared with his own, which his rival possessed, and his accompanying influence and ascendancy over the female mind.

If ever a spirit of persecution as regarded our luckless hero had possessed the savage no less than dogged spirit of Quandish, it was now entertained by him tenfold. "Let him," he muttered to himself, in almost breathless agitation, as his sullen features became yet more revolting in their fiendish expression—"Let him take heed, and not be behind hand in paying the money with which he buys of me the temporary respite of his doom!—let him take heed, the day is not far off!"

Not Shylock himself could have contemplated the claiming his "bond" with more demoniac exultation in case of its forfeit, than Quandish felt

on the present occasion, as he looked forward to revenging himself on the obstacle to his dearest worldly objects, in case he should fail to pay him the unhallowed debt of the "hush-money," of which he had extorted the promise.

While these thoughts passed rapidly through the breast of the "preacher," dame Wetherby's eyes had not been idle in glancing over his countenance, where she perceived an expression of excitement so opposite to that which he generally wore (at least in her presence) of sanctimonious meekness and humility, that her fears were in some degree awakened, as she demanded.—

"Why, what is the matter, good Mr. Quandish? You seem to look very earnestly towards my daughter and the Colonel. Is there any cause of alarm? He is a perfect gentleman, and a friend, Gertrude tells me, of Mr. Fenton."

"Oh no!" replied Quandish, hastily, while he endeavoured to resume his smoothness of aspect; "Oh no! deem not, good Mrs. Wetherby, I imagined aught of alarm was to be apprehended from a 'perfect gentleman and friend of Mr. Fenton.'"

And here his voice assumed a semi-sardonic tone, which passed with Mrs. Wetherby for better than it was, — namely, the pious whine with which Quandish generally spoke in addressing her.

“No,” he continued, significantly ;—“though we can never be too much on our guard in trusting the innocence and inexperience of youth with the spirit that has been versed in the intrigue and iniquity of the world ; yet I did not regard your guest with any feeling of alarm,—further than that (let me avow it) of possibly putting me aside in my suit with your daughter, and (who knows ?) proposing himself to her ; for verily a monarch might be proud of her as a consort !”

“Impossible ! she knows her station too well in life to listen to any proposals of alliance with a person so much her superior in circumstances and rank.”

“He, he !” chuckled out Quandish, endeavouring at the same time to stifle the laugh that fain strove to force its way. “Love (he may tell her, nevertheless) may place them on a level ; and . . . but hush—here they come. I say again, if I appeared momentarily agitated, it was to think I should be (poor and humble person as I am) eclipsed and put back in the maiden’s esteem, and my hopes frustrated as regards my suit towards her, by one against whose rank and superior recommendations, alas ! I cannot stand.”

“Rest contented, then,” replied dame Wetherby, with an authoritative toss of the head. “I was alarmed at first to see you regard my child as

though she were a victim in the hands, possibly, of a betrayer."

"A victim! so she may be yet," muttered Quandish to himself; while the dame proceeded—

"But if your fears were entertained alone at the apprehension that my Gertrude could possibly think of the Colonel as an alliance to which she has a right to aspire, I will soon see if I cannot check all such fantastic notions—proud spirit though she has!"

Here the dame ceased, while Quandish was satisfied on his part that he had uttered enough to place the hostess of the "Traveller's Rest" on her guard against the views of her "distinguished guest," as regarded her daughter, without proceeding to condemn him at once by any exposure which might be at the present moment impolitic as regarded himself.

Just at this moment, the path by which Gertrude and Renmore had been walking brought them, at the turning which was now taken by Mrs. Wetherby and Quandish, precisely in contact with these two last-mentioned persons.

Had Renmore and the Beauty met the fabled Phantoms that haunt the flood and fell of the wild region through which they had of late so constantly wandered in each other's company, they could not have been more scared at the moment

than they now were, at seeing two persons of all others the last they would have desired to meet.

The Beauty regarded both her parent and her slighted suitor at a glance, while an involuntary expression of surprise, mingled with alarm, escaped her. But her wonted pride soon came to her support, as she witnessed the storm gathering in her parent's brow, and against which she knew she must make, as she had already been obliged to do, a firm, yet respectful resistance, in order to save her from the life of painful constraint which would be entailed on her should she succumb.

As for Quandish, he had darted but one glance of reproach and rancour at Gertrude, just as the fiend might be supposed to regard the brow of a seraph, in mingled envy and hatred ; and his regard, then, was instantly fixed on that of his rival. Their eyes met,—on the part of our hero with surprise and some confusion at the suddenness of the meeting ;—on the part of his persecutor with a look of mingled menace, malignant significance, and anger. Renmore quickly regained his self-possession, as he said, with his usual calmness and ease of manner,

“ Ah, Mrs. Wetherby ! Ah, Mr. Quandish ! —good day to you. An agreeable spot this for a little stroll to view the scenery ; and my good fortune,” he added to his hostess, “ not only hap-

pened to lead my steps in the same direction as those of your daughter, but also to meet *you*."

"My daughter is much honoured, Sir," she replied with stiff civility, "by your condescension in accompanying her on her way ; but," she added, turning to Gertrude, whose lovely cheeks wore a yet lovelier lustre in the blush that arose in them, "there are domestic duties at home that require our superintendence, so you and I will return to the house, if you please; besides, there may be some new guests in the way who may call for our attendance."

So curtsying stiffly to "the Colonel," with a look of cold respect and mingled dissatisfaction as regarded himself, and with an air of pride also at exercising her maternal authority as regarded the movements of her daughter, she proceeded, followed by Gertrude, in the direction of the hostelry, leaving Renmore and Quandish together.

If Gertrude had heretofore viewed the countenance of the latter with tacit dread, she was now yet more sensible of this feeling, as she had encountered the malignant glance with which he met her ; and since meeting which, she had turned her eyes studiously away from him, and kept them averted with loathing, during the above brief conference.

A momentary silence had ensued between our hero and the preacher, which was broken by the former, as he proceeded with his accustomed art to direct the attention of his secretly dreaded foe to indifferent subjects on which he commenced conversing. This he did in order insensibly to lead Quandish away, if he could, from the topic which he was conscious, from the appraisal afforded him by Gertrude, was foremost in his mind—namely, that of his rejected suit, and his suspicions that he, Renmore, was a more favoured suitor.

“It is pleasant to have met again!” (said our hero, with well-assumed gaiety;) “such *confidential* friends may here enjoy a *rencontre* without much chance of interruption. By-the-bye, have you heard anything of our former acquaintance in Ireland? they were to be at the Kilkenny races next autumn, and good sport I am told is expected.”

“Hatfield!” exclaimed Quandish, with a determined and ferocious look, as if to express that the artfulness of his companion in attempting to lead him away from the sore and suspected topic was of no avail. . . . “Hatfield!” . . .

“Why? what! my good Simmonds—I mean Quandish—what is the matter?” replied our hero, interrupting him with pretended surprise. “What can all this mean? I trust that no doubt has arisen in your mind that I shall not be true to my promise as to paying you the money in due time?”

“ By heavens ! if I had a doubt, it should go ill with you ! and . . . ”

“ Why, you astonish me ! ” continued Renmore ; “ we had settled everything most amicably, and I trust shall yet have more reason to be satisfied with our mutual negotiation than hitherto. Come, let us talk on more indifferent topics.”

“ No ! ” exclaimed Quandish, stamping with his foot on the ground, in increased passion. “ Think not to trifle with and make a jest of me ! ”

“ A *jest* of you ? ”

“ Yes ! a *jest* of me ! — Are you not opposing, thwarting me, laughing at me, in my most earnest object ? ”

“ What can you possibly mean ? ” inquired Renmore, with a continued look of well-feigned surprise.

“ How can you ask me ? when you know that you are my rival, my successful—my secretly favoured rival,—in the attainment of this Gertrude Wetherby’s hand—for I am confident this is the case ! Yes, you—you—have baffled me in this suit, in which her mother befriended me, and which would, were I successful, place me beyond the reach of want, danger, and living by expedients ; . . . and which,” he continued, choked with passion, “ if it had not been for you—seeing the girl has no inclination for any one besides—that I know of—— ”

. . . "What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Renmore, still pretending the most utter amazement, while Quandish paused and panted for breath, such was the height of passion in which he had spoken. "You astonish me! you have, I am sure, *my* good-wishes in any such suit as you mention."

"Away with your acting, and your attempt to hide the truth! I know too well to whom I am indebted for this frustration of my views. You cannot deceive or cajole *me*, though you have deceived the greater part of mankind you ever dealt with. But mark my words, for this is the only revenge I can take . . . if the money is not ready to a day—that moment shall you be delivered up to the fate which hangs over you, and which it is in my power to hasten or withhold! I care not what retaliation or exposure you may make as regards me; and I should only care about them at this moment, inasmuch as they would ruin my object as regards this suit,—they would spoil my plan with this widow Wetherby. Otherwise, I care not for them; for as long as I betray you, my life is at any rate insured me. So beware of my revenge! And I almost hope you may fail in your payment, that I may put it in force."

"Why! what great mistake has a little jealous feeling made you guilty of?"

“ Away! take off your hand!” exclaimed Quandish, as Renmore retained him, as the former was about to leave the spot, after uttering the menace we have just heard.

“ Well!” continued Renmore, “ if words are of no avail,—if you really cannot be made to credit what I say,—if you persist in letting your passion so far get the better of your reason as to pronounce me the rival of your affections or plans, or both, without any proof . . .”

“ What stronger or more convincing proof do I require than witnessing that girl in your company? when it is notorious she has avoided, refused, and scorned the addresses of every one else?”

“ Pshaw! my good friend, be reasonable. I have indeed fallen in her way by chance, on one or two occasions, but what of that? Really, you surprise me! and to any other person than yourself I should not think it worth my while to enter into explanations as to my conduct, which he would have no right to demand—nor I to afford!” . . .

“ Very well, very well! oppose me if you dare!”

“ Nay, nay,” said Renmore, coolly, but firmly; if it was my inclination to oppose a man, not even would I flinch from doing so, though it were the man himself in whose hands my life was placed! But no,” he continued, resuming his former

tone of cheerfulness and kindly confidence; "opposition is not my object. I would rather conciliate you, and prove to you, by arguments the most satisfactory, that it is far from my wishes or intentions to frustrate your plans, or stand in your way."——

"What proof can you give?"

"What better than removing from the spot? from the sphere of attraction, eh?—from this syren, eh?" he asked, jocularly, as he laughed, while the sullen features of Quandish relaxed somewhat from their more rancorous expression—when suddenly recollecting himself, he said, hastily—

"But how do I know what your object in removing from the spot may be?—to escape my observation?"——

——"To put the money due in your pocket by the appointed time, man!" . . . said Renmore, interrupting him, and speaking in an assured, impressive tone, while he looked with an expression of mingled resolution and authority in his face—

"And what is more," he continued, "to pay my addresses in another, though less inviting quarter! Do not ask me *where*; that you shall perhaps one day know. Suffice it for you, at present, to be convinced of the injustice of your accusation, as regards me, in thwarting your views. . . . I go!—

to-morrow's sun will see my departure, and leave the coast clear for you."

So saying, Renmore took the hand of the ruffian he had been endeavouring to appease, as he wished him "good-bye," and proceeded back to the Traveller's Rest, not desirous of protracting the parley with one he detested and despised, yet was obliged to dread. Quandish screwed the muscles of his loathsome face into a grin of assent, that he was satisfied with the avowal of our hero, while he neither withheld nor advanced the hand which Renmore had taken to shake in pledge of amity, and of assurance that good faith should be observed in the promises he had made to appease his rival.

Quandish's smile, if it may be so called, belied itself in the faintness of its expression, save in that characteristic of mistrust which it sufficiently bespoke; and returning the parting salutation of "good-bye" by a sort of half-growl, half-ejaculation, intended to convey the same meaning, he went his way to the village, while Renmore returned to the Traveller's Rest. As he went, he thought to himself, with reference to what he said to Quandish, "Ay, the coast indeed may be clear for you,—but, fool! think you, the heart or mind of Gertrude could ever be swayed to accede to the vows of such a thing—such an object for loathing

and scorn as thou art? Were she not mine, yet it is not on thee she would ever throw herself away."

With these thoughts passing in his breast, he regained the hostelrie; nor did they occupy him without also recalling to mind the augury of old Mike, as regarded the increased probability of danger that would be entailed on himself, as soon as the pseudo-preacher should discover that he stood in his way as regarded his views concerning Gertrude. The augury was indeed fully fulfilled; and though the storm might appear for the present allayed, its menace still darkened the atmosphere of our hero's day.

CHAPTER VI.

“Man does not know
What a cold faintness made her blood run back.”

SOUTHEY.

RENMORE'S first consideration now, was to secure the sum which was to be paid by him as the redemption of his life. The remainder of the day subsequently to his interview with his enemy had been spent in preparation for his departure, which, independently of his plans of moving as stated to Quandish, he had been requested to resolve upon by his demure hostess, with all the stiff civility of which she was mistress. He had purposely passed up and down stairs repeatedly, from the sitting room he occupied to his room above stairs, in the hope of crossing Gertrude, but in vain. She was nowhere to be seen. Not the least anxious portion of the disquiet he suffered was that which was occasioned by his wish to see her, and conclude the

arrangement for meeting her, with a view to proceeding to Lorton for the purpose of their union. Often did he hurry to the window as he heard a step without ; often, as he heard some one move along the passage into which his door opened, did he hasten to see if it was herself. He was, however, as constantly disappointed.

The blind of the window was drawn completely over the sash, against which the mellow flush of the sunset rays now streamed. It was usually his joy to contemplate those setting rays, with associations of the glory and repose at once, which they lit up in the mind ; but now they were perfectly excluded, as though he shunned their light, that seemed to search him out—as though in detection of some deed of secrecy and danger in which he was engaged.

Far other sensations than those of the happy associations just mentioned seemed to possess him, to mark the serious and careful expression on his countenance, as he bent over the papers, at the table where he was engaged in writing. He seemed to scrutinize every stroke of his pen, with the curious eye of a limner, that examines the effect of his performance during the different stages of its progress.

Thus busily was he engaged when, as though a vision had awakened him, the form of Gertrude herself stood by his side. Notwithstanding all his address and presence of mind, he was unable

to maintain his composure, as he started at her unexpected, and yet more, her unaccountable appearance ; for the door that led into the passage had been carefully secured by him, previously to his sitting down to write. She had, in fact, gained access by a door on the opposite side, which opened from another room, and which had escaped his notice, from the circumstance of its being papered over, to resemble the wall of which it appeared to form a part.

So softly had she entered and stolen to his side that, absorbed as he was in his occupation, he had not perceived her, till she gleamed, thus vision-like, by his side. She started, however, no less than himself, when she perceived the confusion her sudden presence appeared to occasion him, and the involuntary change that came over his countenance. The confidence with which he had ever felt, as regarded her, from the time their acquaintance had strengthened, had indeed occasioned him to wear far less disguise, and veil his thoughts much less in the happy, the dear security of her presence, than before any one else ; and often had she looked on him with a feeling of surprise, not altogether unmixed with a whispering of fear, she knew not why, as she silently contemplated his moods of abstraction, in which occasional expressions of pain would find utterance. But (as, indeed, has been heretofore witnessed) if

the tear stole into her eye, as she would ask, "Are you not well?" her sense of alarm or doubt was speedily banished, on recognising his return to that easy cheerfulness and graceful vivacity which characterized his ordinary manner.

There is no eye so keen as that of a person who loves. From the first moment Gertrude had known him, she had detected the traces of some latent sore,—else why his thoughtfulness—why his study of privacy and distaste of society? But these questions of her heart were but rendered instrumental by him towards increasing her growing attachment to him; for he had but to confess to her that there were feelings that gave him pain,—regrets for those he had lost—the friends of past days,—and the tenderness, the interest, with which she repaid him for his confidence—what was it but love?

It is true, that in her solitary moments, and when her thoughts recurred, as they ever did, to one who had won such a control over her affections, she would marvel at theameleon-like character of the singular being she thought upon—at once so retired, yet so socially cheerful when occasion required, so changeable ever, from the deepest emotion to the gayest indifference,—from the shadow of sadness and thoughtfulness to that of the liveliest—the most careless yet graceful unconstraint! The riddle of such a character, if it, at times, held her

fixed and musing on it, found most willingly a solution of its inconsistency in the thought that the best, the noblest, the gayest, the most generous spirits, are yet sullied at times, and overcast by regrets, such as those he had acknowledged to her, and which render them scarcely themselves. But never had she felt that sense of surprise, not unmingled with fear, so strongly as on the present occasion, when she regarded the look of wildness, and observed the unusual hurry of manner, that the suddenness of her unexpected entry prevented him from so immediately subduing as might have been expedient.

As Renmore started up from his seat, his hand shook so that the letter he was forming at the moment was distorted into a hieroglyphic that would have puzzled Champollion himself to decypher. By a certain instinctive boding of evil, Gertrude's eye glanced at once on the disfigured paper, which Renmore did not attempt to conceal, for in doing so he would have been exciting the very suspicion which, it was possible, he apprehended. He, however, caught up his handkerchief, which was lying by his side on the table, and lifting it hastily to his face as if to use it, let it drop instantaneously, intending that it should fall and hide the paper. Unfortunately, however, the draught of air occasioned by snatching up the

handkerchief blew the paper on the floor, and it alighted at Gertrude's feet. He hastened now to pick it up, while he addressed her—

“Ah! Gertrude, is it you, my dearest? what agitation does your sudden presence occasion me! I have been endeavouring throughout the day, and ever since I came in, to catch a glimpse of you, but in vain. How your sudden presence surprises me! Oh! the happiness at seeing you!”

While he thus spoke, he flung the paper, which he had by this time picked up, into the fire, where it blazed away till its burnt and flimsy skeleton winged its way in black flakes up the chimney. Renmore's eye watched it and fixed itself on Gertrude's face by turns, for her glance was directed to it with a look of curiosity and apparent pain, to judge by the paleness of her cheek, as something whispered to her that the secret which had expired with that paper was, also, one and the same with that of her lover's agitation on her sudden entrance.

“I have with difficulty snatched an opportunity of eluding the vigilance exercised over my movements, in order to see you once again before your departure, and conclude what we were interrupted in saying—to—”

Here the tears that agitation and alarm occasioned, checked her utterance, as she hid her head

in Renmore's bosom, who now clasped her to his heart—inquiring anxiously, what was the matter? what was the cause of her disquiet?

“Had I known you had been so earnestly engaged, I should not have intruded on you.”

“Intrude on me, Gertrude?—intrude on me? I had been praying, only a moment past, for your presence, and you blessed me by affording it!”

“But why that agitation?—that alarm which it seemed you evinced on my coming in? What was there in that paper that I thought you seemed so desirous to hide? Dear, dear Sir! if you love me with the sincerity you have declared, rid me of the painful anxiety I have been occasioned, in seeing you exhibit yourself on the present occasion so different from that which you have usually appeared.”

Renmore suspected that Gertrude's uneasiness arose from her having seen what it was he had been engaged in describing on the paper. Her glance having instantly alighted on it as it fell at her feet, she had perfect time to see its contents. In a word, it was a leaf of a “cheque book,” in which the name, not of “Renmore,” but of “Lawton,” was traced, and the ink being as yet wet, the natural inquiry which would suggest itself was—
“What right had the hand that traced it to do

so?" What was more, the writing of the name was a perfect imitation, an exact *fac-simile*, of the squire of Blacktarn's hand of writ!

"My darling Gertrude, you surprise me!" he replied to her, with his usual calmness and composure, which he had now perfectly regained. "What should possibly have suggested to your mind that there was any evil in that paper? or, that it was connected with my very reasonable surprise at witnessing you when I had so little expected to see you? If I appeared agitated, how could I well be otherwise, loving you as I do?—holding conflict as I do with the painful necessity of quitting the walls that contain you, and where alone I have of late learned to know what happiness is? . . . As for the paper which you saw, and which I am sorry now I burned—it was a mere trifle. However, I did it in my hurry, my eagerness to fling aside all other subjects that occupied me, when that dearest one of yourself was presented me. As for that paper, it certainly was written in some degree of hesitation of mind and uneasiness. In fact, I had been invited to Blacktarn, to Mr. Lawton's; but such was my distress of mind at the circumstances that have separated me, for the present moment, from yourself, that feeling little inclination to see any society, I was sitting, hesitating whether I should not refuse going; for

heaven knows, it will be a penance to me when I feel I leave you behind ; and so I sat scribbling, scarcely knowing what I did, the name, ' Lawton, Lawton, Lawton,' in my abstraction, and on your entering the room, I was scared as though roused suddenly from some dream. I never heard you enter . . . and have you come at last, only to upbraid me ?”

And before Gertrude could reply, he sealed their conciliation, if it may so be called, which his words had wrought, by kissing away the tear that had stolen into her eyes, emboldened as he was by the more cheerful and composed aspect which her countenance had gradually assumed as he spoke.

In fact, though there was much of plausibility in what he had said to pacify her, yet there was also no small degree of truth. Loving her as he did, he might well have exhibited the agitation she witnessed in him ; and, as we all know how, in a fit of abstraction, both the mind and the pen may wander without any definite object, it was perfectly reasonable he should have inadvertently penned the good squire of Blacktarn's name twice or thrice over, as he was doubting in his own mind whether he should write to decline his invitation or not. The paper Gertrude had seen fully bore out the explanation her lover had given, since the name of Lawton was repeated two or three times

on it ; and if the reader should be more inclined to consider that this circumstance denotes the character of "counterfeit," we can only say that it must, at any rate, have been a mere primary essay for a future and more finished effort. But, supposing there was anything that suggested to Gertrude in particular, no less than the reader, the idea of the writing in question being a counterfeit, what could this circumstance be?—we shall hear from herself.

The smile of renewed confidence which now played on Gertrude's lip delighted Renmore, as again he pressed her hand, and clasped her to his heart, as she replied, shewing him a note she had received not long before she had sought this interview with him—

"Judge," she said, "if I had not reason for being alarmed at every writing I saw that was more equivocal or suspicious than that on a direction-post, or the dial yonder in the garden that tells us 'Time flies,' or, 'On this moment hangs eternity!' Look at this note and judge."

So saying, she put in Renmore's hand a scroll more like the vulgar account of some petty chapman than anything else, soiled and wafered as it was. Its contents ran thus :—

"Those we place most confidence in are sometimes the most worthy of our distrust. Should you hereafter have cause to repent an irremedi-

able disaster as the consequence of your present misplaced affection, remember, you were warned in time. Beware of an impostor and a criminal."

"Umph! what, *no* name to this portentous piece of 'warning!'" observed Renmore, as he finished reading it, which he had done throughout in a careless and contemptuous tone. "Well! no doubt this is 'kindly meant,' and is, assuredly, directed against your admirer," continued Renmore, artfully turning away from himself the possible application of the note—"Quandish, the Buttermere saint! We are always bound to be thankful for good intentions and kindly offered advice, but it is a pity the writer is a little late in his admonition, for we had already anticipated him in being on our guard; for I told you I had heard, generally, that this Quandish was no saint after all!"

"But was not the note enough to alarm me?"—interposed Gertrude—"enough to alarm any one?—no name!—such mystery!"

"I know it would have alarmed *me*," replied Renmore, smiling, as he appeared to amuse himself with tearing the scrawl into pieces and throwing it into the fire. "Now, I am sure *I* can have as little respect for this 'wolf in sheep's clothing,' this Quandish, as any one can have; but, mark me, Gertrude! *I* am not the person to indite an anonymous note to do him injury!"

And here, as usual, the generosity of the sentiments he expressed, together with that dignified and calm impressiveness of manner, he knew so well how to assume, at once overawed and convinced her that if distrust and disquiet had been awakened in her mind, it was not to be entertained in connexion with anything that concerned her lover. Meantime, he continued—"Now, I am not surprised that, so universally beloved as you are, there are those who—not perhaps knowing that you have a sufficient guardian over your interests in either Mr. Fenton or myself—have written this to place you on your guard against this designing person who aspires to your hand. I am not surprised, I repeat, at this. And, if I pleased, *I* might, of all men, say much more, as I have already hinted, to his disparagement. But this I am above doing. I am satisfied you are sufficiently alive to the guile of his character to require no other warnings."

"Assuredly, none!" exclaimed Gertrude, earnestly.

"But this much I may be permitted to impart to you—that to myself he has been guilty of the blackest ingratitude, and hence (such is the baseness of human nature) is my worst enemy."

"Is it possible?" said Gertrude, indignantly.

"It is indeed but too certain; yet, after all, it is but an exemplification of the baseness of

the human character, an examination of which teaches us (I am sorry to say) that we have only to place a man under an obligation, to make him at once a secret enemy; and yet more, whenever an opportunity offers itself—an avowed one.”

Here Renmore’s tone became impassioned, as he seemed animated by a virtuous indignation, while he continued, “Yes, and if it were possible for this Quandish to do me any mischief by traducing me, he would do so!”

“Traduce you?”

“Yes; for the very reason I compassioned and befriended him when others might have crushed him for his delinquency. Therefore, dear love, mark me—when I am out of the way, heed not whatever this low being’s tongue of gall may say to asperse me. Had he been a more worthy object of my indignation, he should have met it. As it is, I despise him, as I trust you will.”

“You need not indeed ask me! But hark, there is some one in the next room, from which I came into yours!—it is my mother—I have not a moment to lose—say *when*——”

“I will return here to you as speedily as possible; to a day exactly, I cannot positively say; but hasten to Lorton, by all means, if you find any additional constraint imposed on you here. But transmit me a note, first of all, to Blacktarn,

(where I shall in all probability be,) to state the period when you purpose throwing yourself on Mr. Fenton's protection. I will hasten thither to join you—to claim you,—and yet I—I fear that . . .”

“ Why do you hesitate ?” asked Gertrude, as she looked inquiringly in his face, with lips apart and with flushed cheek, bespeaking the earnestness of her interest.

“ I know not why, but I would rather we were united by any one but Mr. Fenton.”

“ Heavens ! why ?”

“ You have witnessed, ere now, my agitation as his name was mentioned. In fact, though he does not know me, he knew something of my parents—of my early history ; and upon explaining this, there may be some pain occasioned. I need not, indeed, recall to you that you have witnessed the pain which some such considerations have already awakened.” And then, recovering himself, he said more calmly, “ But no ; this is mere selfishness in me, to shrink from any disclosure of this kind ; besides, I may defer it to a future opportunity, and after our union. Yes, yes ; it shall be so—it must be so ! It is agreed, then, we meet at Lorton, if you are forced to quit your home. If not, I will come back here to you ; . . . but you will write. . . . Farewell !”

Scarcely had Gertrude time to answer back the word of parting, as he snatched her eagerly to his heart and pressed his lips to hers,—where soul met soul at the lips as truly as heart beat against heart—when the voice of Mrs. Wetherby was heard without, requesting admittance. Renmore delayed not to gratify her request, when she entered, and looking round the room, with an inquiry purporting that she fancied her daughter's voice had been overheard by her, she left it again on finding the object of her search was not there. Gertrude had escaped by the opposite door.

Renmore, left to himself again, turned once more (after having locked both the doors of his room) to his "literary" occupations, satisfied with the explanation he had given Gertrude, and above all, satisfied with having, as he doubted not, placed her effectually on her guard against any criminations that the exasperation or malice of his enemy might urge him to utter against him during his absence, with a view to rendering him an object of her alarm and suspicion. That such would be the case he augured, since he had no doubt that the writer of the anonymous epistle in his disfavour was Quandish. Meantime, ere we leave him to his "literary lucubration," it should be observed that the very card which bore his "worthy friend" Lawton's "autograph" was now placed on the

table before him; if he had, as he has just been heard to mention, any hesitation as to whether he should visit Blacktarn or not, we may here state that his hesitation was now at an end. Being disturbed, as our "Colonel" was, in his quarters at Buttermere, the course of his campaign was at once determined to be in the direction of Blacktarn, whither he was under an engagement to go, and where, no doubt, he was by this time eagerly expected.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide ;
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlock'd their hearts.”

SHELLEY.

THE period of our hero's visit to Blacktarn was looked forward to with no common interest, both by the fair mistress of Blacktarn and her sagacious sire ; though the causes of their interest might not have been altogether the same. Mr. Lawton, from the first period of his acquaintance with his expected guest, had never sallied forth on any adventure of improvement without wishing Colonel Renmore could but see it !

“ For once,” he would exclaim, with amusing self-complacency, “ I have come in contact with a sensible, unprejudiced person, who exhibits no petty jealousy as to the merits of another man's inventions and improvements, to gratify which, a system

of mean, unworthy detraction is pursued—ahem !—yes; there are some I could name to whom I can never shew any single experiment I am proceeding with, but they must needs find some fault—suggest some difficulty—some obstacle to the chance of its success. Pshaw ! I despise such spirits. All this is jealousy,—sheer envy at being outstripped in the exalted race of extending the range of ‘scientific invention,’ offering new and improved methods for facilitating agricultural and mechanical operations, and, in fact, being benefactors to our country.”

Thus soothed by the flattering unction which self-complacency laid to his soul, the worthy Mr. Lawton piqued himself no less on his sagacity in experiment and invention, than on the exaltedness of his character as being of public benefit to mankind. A great man was he in his own eyes; and piqued, as he justly felt himself to be, with those objections to his plans which others exhibited, (and which he imputed with natural and pardonable vanity to jealousy,) he was delighted with the generosity, above all other traits, which he had discovered in our hero, who could afford to listen to the arduous achievements of another, without feeling the malignant influence of sordid envy.

Colonel Renmore, then, was no less an object of admiration to the sire for his magnanimity and candour, than he was to the fair Laura for his

gallantry, engaging manner, and accomplishments. In fact, she might well esteem every one else as insipid in comparison with him, considering the little she had as yet seen of the world and society, and so alive, consequently, as she was to any impression,—being, as yet, but as wax, new and soft for the reception of the stamp that should shape or mark it.—She was, on the present occasion, seated at the instrument, while Mr. Lawton was occupied in conning a large “scroll,” or “roll” rather, of paper, purporting to be no less portentous a document than a “plan” for the improvement of the Blacktarn manor. At length, he threw it down on the table, as he turned to his daughter—

“Come, come, my dear, play something else—let us have a little variety—that is a charming thing, no doubt, which you played in accompaniment with Colonel Renmore the other night, but you have been playing scarcely anything else since.”

“Indeed, papa! I was not aware I had played it so often; but—but,” replied Laura, smiling, while the blush rose in her cheek—

“But—but,” interposed Mr. Lawton, smiling in turn, “to whatever strain the heart—eh?—is turned, to that it recurs involuntarily, and with unchanging pleasure—eh?—umph!”

“My dear papa, how can you think of such a

thing?" replied Laura, as the blush wore a yet heightened crimson over her fair forehead and face.

"Well, well," continued Mr. Lawton, half playfully, half seriously,—expressing himself in his usually important manner, however. . . . "Well, well, child, more improbable things have happened—ahem!—than—no! I wont say what. . . . However, thus much I will say—ahem!—that the Colonel is a person of high qualifications; ya—as —as much so as"

"My dear papa!" interposed Laura, still crimsoned over with blushes, and laughing at her father's banter, as she was willing to treat it, though she perhaps might tacitly own it would not displease her were its application true.

"As much so," continued Mr. Lawton, "as of high pretensions; and—ahem!—I do not wonder at his having made himself acceptable (as I suspect) to a certain young lady not a hundred miles from Blacktarn."

"How ridiculous! my dear papa."

"For—ahem!—he, no doubt, paid her no inconsiderable attentions; and should they be—ahem!—increased, why . . ."

"How can you continue to tease me so," said Laura, laughing, as she declared she could not understand to what her father was alluding, while he

spoke thus; and so saying, she rose from the instrument, and taking up the portentous sheet, or roll, of improvements of the Blacktarn manor, asked what was being proceeded with on the present day. This suggestion recalled Mr. Lawton to his favourite topic.

“ Ah ! you remind me well, child. We will go out together and see how the ilex trees thrive that I had transplanted the other day to fill up the vacant spot in the lawn. Come, put on your bonnet, and join me on the lawn.”

So saying, Mr. Lawton sallied forth to witness the condition of the ornamental trees in question, leaving Laura to follow him, which she shortly after did, as he stood contemplating the trees on the lawn, while he exclaimed in a tone of self-complacent triumph—

“ There ! I was told when I entered on the experiment of transplanting these trees, that their growth was too advanced* to admit of any hope of their surviving the attempt. . . . Pooh ! it was to prove this, as well as to fill up the gap in the lawn, that the experiment was made.”

* The horticultural reader will remember with interest Sir H. Stewart's similar experiment. (See *Blackwood's Mag.*, 1829.) The trees transplanted were of twenty-five years' growth and upwards; but, in such an experiment, more caution and management are requisite than belong to the character of our too sanguine and self-complacent “ conjuror of Blacktarn.”

[The trees, we should observe with a "Nota Bene," were of thirty years' growth.]

"Certainly, papa; but don't you consider that the leaves begin to look a little sear and foxy?"

"Pooh! pooh! not a jot, not a jot;—just at first, perhaps, they may look a little less lively; but it was mere jealousy that dictated the suggestion of certain persons to whom I mentioned the experiment."

"What was that?"

"Why, that I was merely digging holes in the best piece of turf I had about the grounds, instead of 'transplanting.'"

"But then the frosts, papa—how will they bear the frosts? For I am told that trees, advanced in growth so much as these, are rarely to be moved from their original site with any chance of success."

"My dear child, you know little about these matters. The frosts, indeed! I know well that this objection has been made. I have known a whole grove of laurels, ay, more than enough to decorate the brows of the whole conclave of our 'genii of the lake'—I say, I have known it all destroyed by the frosts in one night. This is true; (ahem!) but it is an evil these ilex trees might have suffered in their original position, and does not follow as a necessary consequence on their present one. Pshaw! I hate such trumpery objec-

tions. I wish Colonel Renmore were here. I am sure *he* would join with me in considering——”

“Why, papa, who is this riding up the park?” interposed Laura, as her attention was now occupied by the circumstance of which she had just apprised Mr. Lawton, who, turning his eyes away from the ilex trees to the equestrian stranger in the park, exclaimed—

“Why, bless me, how singular! it is the very person I was wishing were here. It is Colonel Renmore himself!”

So saying, Mr. Lawton and his daughter proceeded in the direction of the house, towards the portico of which our hero was now nearer and nearer approaching, followed by a groom he had newly taken into his service. Nor was it long before he alighted, as the groom had now ridden up, and by the awkward mode in which he touched his hat, and even “made a leg,” as he drew his foot back from the stirrup, plainly shewed that he was some “Johnny Raw” of the neighbourhood whom the Colonel had kindly taken into his service. He had taken him, in fact, as a sort of “*valet-de-place*” on the occasion of his visit to Blacktarn, being the best that offered; and not a little amused was Mr. Lawton to recognise, though it was with some difficulty, the waggish physiognomy and carrotty locks of honest Jock, the Buttermere carrier, who having

been out of work, was glad to accept Renmore's proposal of accompanying him as groom, and accordingly doffed his smock-frock, and donned a spruce livery, with cockade, top-boots, &c. The worthy squire could not refrain (after having greeted the "master") from uttering a word of recognition to the "man," who was well known throughout the neighbourhood.

"Why, Jock, so you are promoted," he said; "I'm glad to see it."

"Promoted, Sir! what's that?" asked the new groom.

"Why, 'lifted up,' Jock!"

"Well, so it is now," replied Jock; "for I *am* lifted up from the ground to the saddle! and, I take it, I've got the 'saddle on the right horse,' in the Colonel's service. From 'carrying,' I am now 'carried' myself," added our Touchstone.

"Active and passive moods both, then, are you perfect in, Jock!" said his master, good-humouredly; "so you will please now to exercise the first of these, in 'carrying' off the horses to the stable, while I join Mr. Lawton."

Jock touched his hat, and did as he was bid; while Mr. Lawton, now extending his hand to our hero, again expressed his pleasure at seeing him.

"Laura and myself were but this moment past speaking of you, and wishing you were with us,

that we might have the benefit of your good taste on the subject of a little 'experiment' that we are amusing ourselves with just at present."

Renmore smiled as he took off his hat and bowed to Miss Lawton, while he replied to the cordial greeting of his host by expressing how happy he was to have come in upon them at so interesting a juncture.

The whole party immediately proceeded towards the lawn, as our hero declined the offer of entering the house and taking refreshment, which was suggested by his careful host with his usual good-humoured hospitality.

"Well, then, we will look round the grounds."

Of course the first object of inspection offered their "distinguished guest" was that of the ilex trees; and when the "slight objection" relative to their fate from the frosts was uttered contemptuously by the sanguine experimentalist, our hero's well-bred forbearance perfectly understood how to humour his good host's weakness, as he observed, in a strain of equal contempt—

"Really, if we were to regard everything we undertook in this *frosty* way, the stream of improvement would run faint and flagging indeed—nay, would be quite stagnant!"

"To be sure! Well said!—good!—cleverly illustrated!" exclaimed the Blacktarn conjuror, in high

exultation. . . . "And is not the lawn improved by them?" he continued, looking round.

"The place is worth infinitely more, from the ornament they afford," replied Renmore, apparently no less gratified than the scientific gentleman who planted them.

"Worth hundreds more!" continued Lawton, taking up the words of his guest; "and yet I was told I was but 'wasting time in digging holes'—mark that—ay, 'digging holes'—in the lawn, and preparing logs for the fire!—ha, ha!"

"And I think you were told right," thought Renmore; while he composed his countenance, and sagely observed, "It would be well for these prognosticators of ill to wait until the evil arrives, before the utterance of their ill-natured outcry. Ill-luck always arrives too soon; and it is time enough for us to raise our voices when we meet it."

"Well said!—splendid!—now that is what I call philosophy!" said the exulting experimentalist, not overhearing the remark which, in a lowered tone, his guest addressed to his fair hostess, as he observed, in the course of the "by-play" of conversation which he had all this time been carrying on with herself—

"Not to mention that it is as well with a little foresight to prevent, if we can, the mischiefs that may happen; and with them the necessity of blaming our own folly or blindness, as it may be. Of

course, I do not apply this remark to the present instance, but speak generally."

Laura smiled, as though a little sceptical as to the entire sincerity of this remark, though she was willing to acknowledge its politeness ; and she now led the way down a wide gravel walk, forming a terrace, fenced on one side with a stately hedge of yew trees, quite according to the fashion of the true old English gardens. About the centre of this terrace, access was given to it by a spacious flight of turf steps, which commanded a noble and extensive prospect.

"Charming ! delightful !" exclaimed Renmore, as he stood gazing on the wide maze of vale, and wood, and flood, spread as a map beneath him, far as eye could stretch. "You are beautifully situated here, Miss Lawton. I know no spot in the whole of what I have seen in this district more desirable than Blacktarn."

"I hope you will become better acquainted with it," said his hearty host, as Laura added—

"Indeed, I hope so, too. But do you describe," she continued, pointing out an object in the prospect, "that white 'speck' through the trees, on the other side the sheet of water, to the left?"

"Oh yes, perfectly ; and if I mistake not, that must be our friend Miss Howbiggen's residence, at the further side of the lake of Buttermere."

“I pointed it out,” continued Laura, “for I was just going to inquire of you whether her invalid brother, Mr. Howbiggen, is better than he was the other day? You were going to stay a short time, were you not, at their house?”

“Indeed,” replied Renmore, “they did me the honour to ask me there; but I could not hesitate for one moment which to prefer—the attractions of Blacktarn or Miss Howbiggen’s—however sensible I might be of that lady’s attention;” and here he bowed, while Laura smiled and coloured slightly in acknowledgment of the compliment, as Mr. Lawton interposed—

“And I hope, now you have come to see us, Colonel, you will not be in too great a hurry to run away from us. You will stay, of course, over the period of the boat-race?”

“I’m sure I shall be delighted to stay as long as I may *be able*,” replied Renmore. “And when is the boat-race? I have not yet heard any tidings concerning it.”

“Oh, quite a ‘regatta’ on lake Derwentwater! There is also to be a celebration on the principal island—a grand flower-show, previously to the race, and Laura, I hope, will send some specimens which will not be far from carrying off the prize. By-the-bye, you must shew Colonel Renmore the conservatory after dinner. When is the festival to be, my dear—on the 18th or 20th?”

“I think as late as the 20th, which is ten days hence.”

“Oh, I hope certainly to prolong my stay in this neighbourhood,” said Renmore, “until *then* ;” and he was going here to make some remark complimentary on his fair hostess’s taste for flowers, when Mr. Lawton interposed—

“What ! only so short a time do you stay as ten days ? Well, I trust that during that period (brief as it is) you will make Blacktarn your home. It will afford much pleasure to Laura and myself.”

“Indeed, you honour me greatly,” replied Renmore ; “and I need scarcely say,” he continued, addressing himself to Laura, “that if I am permitted by circumstances to remain here, I shall be delighted to do so. In fact, nothing but duties unavoidably requiring my absence would willingly take me away from a spot so delightful, and where I find attractions so great.”

Laura coloured again, and hastily exchanged glances with her sire, whose portentous look (meant as it was to be significant) did not escape the notice of our hero, who could not but be sensible that he might very well feel himself perfectly “at home” with the good innocents, his host and youthful hostess, whose hearts and confidence he had so completely won.

“By-the-bye,” said Mr. Lawton, as they turned

away from the view of Howbiggen's house, "do you remember the bet we had after dinner, Colonel? I mean on the evening we passed together at Howbiggen's."

"The bet?" replied Renmore, with pretended ignorance.

"Yes, to be sure,—about Hatfield."

"Oh!—that he would not counterfeit your handwriting. Oh, yes, I remember it now you mention it; but there is so little likelihood that we shall ever see the subject of the bet accomplished, that the circumstance had wholly escaped my memory."

"It would be impossible for him not to be detected. Anybody who has seen my handwriting knows it cannot be forged. My banker at Cocker-mouth would be able, for example, to tell at a glance whether the handwriting of the cheque offered them as mine were genuine or not."

"Your banker at Cockermouth!" thought Renmore to himself, as if this was a slight piece of information it was interesting to him to know; then he continued aloud, as he smiled and looked towards Laura—

"Oh, that fellow's address would be able to accomplish anything, if he had the opportunity. Why, for a bet, he would even have the audacity, not only to endeavour to counterfeit your autograph,

but do anything yet more arduous—ay, run off with the heiress of Blacktarn herself !”

“ Well, let me catch him achieving that, and he may claim five hundred pounds !”

“ Thank you, papa, I’m much obliged to you,” replied Laura, laughing ; “ I do not at all bargain for such a proof of either his audacity or adroitness as this. Yet I should like to see him very much. So clever a person and so accomplished (as I am told) may well be an object of curiosity. Is he handsome ?”

“ I really don’t know,” said Renmore ; “ and even if he *were*, I ought not to say so ; for do you know,” he continued, laughing as though relating a good joke, “ I have been told I bear some *resemblance* to him ! ”

“ Oh, then I am sure he” said Laura, checking herself, as she coloured and laughed ; while Mr. Lawton taking up her words, supplied them as he exclaimed—

“ Is handsome ! you were going to say, child. Well, so he is,—ha, ha ! But only to think,” he continued, as he laughed, “ that the rogue should bear a resemblance to you, Colonel. Pooh, pooh ! you may say so, but I have heard from those who have seen him, that he is shorter than you, and has different coloured hair.”

“ Nay,” said Renmore, smiling, and continuing

the joke, "I might be highly flattered at having the likeness attributed to me. For my vanity, I am sure, would be gratified to its fullest extent, since I should be an object of curiosity to thousands who would stand on tip-toe to catch a glimpse of me."

"Good, good!—true, true!" replied Mr. Lawton, winding up the whole with his *fiat* of approbation, while the trio had now returned to the portico of the house, the period of dinner being fast approaching. Laura now took her leave, for a time, of her guest, who was shewn to the room appropriated to his use; and the toilette having occupied the important interval of the next half-hour, the party met again, and Colonel Renmore had soon the honour of handing the heiress of Blacktarn into the dining-room.

Mr. Lawton's table exhibited everything that an old English country gentleman's hospitality could afford. Venison that had run in his own park, pike that had darted in his own pools, leveret and moor-poult; and as to the last, it may be observed that the year was not advanced enough to afford a specimen of the bird in its more matured growth and flavour. In fact, Mr. Lawton had an honest pride in having everything he possibly could for the purposes of life from his own domain; and those who were willing to "quiz" him for his "scientific manœuvres" could not do so otherwise

than good-humouredly ; for they had only to enter his doors to discover his thorough goodness of heart, and pleasure in exercising the rites of hospitality. His pride on this score was not less than on the subject of his supremacy as an experimental philosopher, and even those who were most ready to satirize him, soon put an extinguisher on their more caustic propensities when the steam of the Blacktarn venison, the “ fine bitter” of the moor-fowl from the Blacktarn glens and heath-crags, regaled them. “ What can equal our good friend Lawton’s ‘*deserts*,’ except his—dinners!” would Dr. Esdaile exclaim in the true spirit of that epicurism for which he was distinguished. And, indeed, though the “ bon-vivant” Doctor used to make merry at the expense of his friend Lawton, he no less entertained a considerable degree of esteem for him, and respect too, as regarded the better and more generous qualities he possessed.

But dinner being over, and Laura having now retired from the table where she had presided with so much grace, Colonel Renmore was left alone with his host and the claret. But their libations were not very protracted, exhibiting a worthy breach of the Silenian observance of the time, which was an age of “toping” after dinner.

On Renmore’s entrance into the drawing-room, he was struck with the antique beauty of its style and

fashion. The furniture was all massive and profusely gilded ; so were the borders of the window-frames, walls, and ceiling ; the looking-glasses were in the Louis XIV. style, and the ceiling was vaulted, and painted with designs which bespoke more taste than he had ever dreamed of discovering amongst the devious wilds of Blacktarn. But these decorations were executed under the supervision of the grandfather of the present proprietor ; which last person, if he was unable duly to appreciate them for their intrinsic merit, certainly held them in high esteem as far as their character of family memorial was concerned.

The eye was very agreeably met by a large glass door at the end of the room, exhibiting, in a conservatory within, a beautiful assortment of exotics ; while hues of all varieties, and blossoms of all odours, joined their combined tribute of beauty and fragrance to gratify both sight and smell on entering it.

“ A perfect paradise this, indeed ! ” said Renmore, as he walked round it, escorted by Laura. “ It is difficult to know on which side to turn first, so dazzled and delighted is the eye with all. You are skilled in the science of flowers, doubtless, Miss Lawton ? At any rate, your taste for their varieties, both native and foreign, is, I can easily see, most eminent.”

It is incumbent on us to mention here that

amongst the various accomplishments of this singular, nay, "gifted" person, Renmore or Hatfield,—botany was not amongst the least prominent. In answer to his observation, Mr. Lawton said—

"Yes; Laura amuses herself in this way now and then—nay, she is not an unworthy disciple of Linnæus, I can tell you, Colonel."

"Oh! really, papa, you give me credit for attributes more scientific than I deserve, or indeed desire; for," she added, smiling to Renmore, "my ambition does not reach so high as to style myself a 'botanist.' I am a very poor member of the blue-stocking sisterhood. The pleasure the flowers afford me in their variety, and the superior beauty with which they repay any additional care of them, is what chiefly interests me in them."

"And permit me to add," said Renmore, "that this is what is chiefly deserving, too, of your interest. Although I will not call botany altogether so petty or dry a study as many consider it, yet I think, in pursuing it, we often lose sight of that which constitutes the main charm of the lovely world of flowers. Their chief interest is, I think, in that language which the mind and feelings interpret in them; the gratitude, for instance, with which they seem to repay our care, and the joy they seem to testify under the beauty of the season that calls forth their bloom."

“Yes, indeed, I think so,” said Laura, while Mr. Lawton’s assent expressed it in the more pompous exclamations, “Good! Ay, to be sure! Most assuredly!”

“Nay,” continued Renmore, “I often, according to the idea just expressed, hold what I may call a sort of tacit commune with flowers—ay, as though a spirit dwelt in them, and spoke in them. Indeed, as to their mere vitality and formation, how much are they like the human frame? They languish as we do, and lose their radiant colours as we do our complexions, in confinement from the light. And then, look again at the curious and minute ramifications of veins through which their sap, the pale ‘blood’ of plants—passes.”

“On—my—word—” exclaimed Mr. Lawton with oracular emphasis, now as much elevated by the subject as his guest and daughter could be—“vastly interesting consideration!”

“Then,” continued Renmore, directing Laura’s attention to a splendid specimen of ‘cactus,’ which was on the stand close by them, “see the beauty with which the stem is finished and topped with the blossom. I think nothing speaks the wonder and ‘fineness’ (if I may use the expression) of the Creator’s hand more than a flower. And as a specimen of his most ‘cunning’

artifice, I look with reverence on flowers. Then their petals and chalices shrinking and expanding, as though asking dew or complaining of drought ! They have a language,—they have a spirit and a meaning, (as you well said,) in them—which conveys a double interest when taken into consideration, beyond the charm of their mere fragrance or hue !”

“ De—light—ful ! — pic—to — ri — al !” exclaimed the Blacktarn philosopher, all open-eyed and open-mouthed at the illustration his guest was pursuing. Laura also felt it was deserving her interest no less than it claimed her concurrence, and seeing he hesitated in continuing, she said, “ Nay ; pray go on.”

“ It is this view, then, of the ‘ vegetable creation,’” he continued, “ which exhibits the most eminent features of its claim to interest. The easterns have made flowers a pretty channel of interpretation to their thoughts, as emblems of feelings and sentiments.”

“ Yes,” interposed Laura, with her usual justness of remark ; “ but this is of less interest. The making them reflect, or represent rather, feelings, is a secondary source of interest, and a feebler one than the language that exists in themselves !”

“ No doubt ! no doubt !” continued Renmore ;

“but even this consideration of them is more interesting than when they are regarded as mere subjects for the dry pedantic ‘analysis’ of the botanist; for example, let us take the violet. Who would desire, pray, to enter on a technical analysis of its ‘properties,’ when its odour breathes of vernal sweetness and health, and its hues charm us not less than the eye of beauty itself?”

And here, as his glance met Laura’s, and spoke its meaning that her own beauty might well be referred to, the blush rose on her cheek as he proceeded in a tone of warmth, kindled no less by the interest and charm of the subject itself than by witnessing that it was shared by those he addressed.

“It is the poetry—it is the sentiment—the mental luxury derived from such lovely objects, that more worthily attract us than any dry research as to their mechanism. This is to me like tearing their lovely coloured leaves to bits, and soiling them under foot! No, I am no ‘botanist.’”

“Indeed, who could be, Colonel,” said Mr. Lawton, “to hear you take such a much higher and worthier ground for the consideration of the subject! These are ‘blooming’ arguments, and of ‘fine mould,’—‘haw—haw—haw!’”

And here the worthy Lawton with due self-complacence laughed solemnly at the happiness of the “hit” he had made, while he now led the way from the conservatory back again to the drawing-room,

observing, "Really it is odd to me, since flowers have so much 'metaphysical' and 'poetical' charm about them, that the world of science should have busied itself so dryly on so fair a subject."

"That is just what Milton says of philosophy!" observed Renmore, smiling; while Lawton continued—

"Nay; Linnæus (ah—em!) goes so far, I am told, as to enter into the 'family'—the domestic history of his 'world of flowers!'—assures us they have their 'ladies and gentlemen' amongst them, and their marriages!"

"And happy weddings and sweet hymenæals must such lovers as these boast of, and celebrated amidst all the joy and glory of nature!" rejoined Renmore, smiling. "The idea is a pretty one, though I confess they all look so lovely alike, that, not wearing any wedding 'favours' to distinguish them, we should be in the dark as to which were the bride and which the bridegroom! Come," he added, 'as he sate down at a little writing-table of Miss Lawton's, as she had now repaired to the piano-forte—"here is a trifle expressive of our embarrassment on this pretty theme."

So saying, he took the piece of paper he had been writing the lines* on (for such they were) to the piano, and observing that he thought a particu-

* Specimens of his composition were published in the periodicals of the time, both in verse and prose.

lar air Laura now proceeded to play would suit them, he sung the following:—

“THE LOVES OF THE ROSES.

“Music, and Eloquence, and Love,
In mystic accents warble still
Nature’s delight, around, above,
In all her bloom, o’er vale and hill!

“Soft o’er that Rose the breezes hush,
To hear its sigh, they lull their own.
What language kindles in that blush?—
Love’s music is the Rose’s tone!

“Say, gale! if, there, the Lover speaks,
Blushing at his own raptured tale?
Or lights that glow his mistress’ cheeks?
So like they blush! Interpret, gale!

“Or thou, Night’s bird! harmonious lover!*

Thy rosy Beauty—which is she?
Or on the bee’s wing let me hover—
For that sweet secret owns the bee!

“And why? Because the rover knows
That where his sweetest feast he sips,
’Tis *there*, the *Lady*-flower blows,
To woo him to her honey’d lips!

“And ravish’d by thy perfum’d breath,
Laura, thy charms, as roams he near,
He’ll deem *thy* honey’d lip the wreath
His fav’rite blossom’s beauties wear!”

* Alluding to the old oriental fable of the nightingale making love to the rose. The fable here, however, proceeds to a further conclusion, and proves the bee the “best botanist!”

“Capitally turned!” exclaimed Mr. Lawton, who stood by the piano. “Positively the best discourse on botany I ever heard yet! By-the-bye, what do you think, Colonel?” he continued, lowering his tone to a graver key. “Fond as I am of all departments of science, I actually offered myself as leader of a horticultural society in the neighbourhood, promising to give a sort of ‘discourse’ on the subject on every anniversary meeting.”

“Well; and were they not too ready to accept so handsome a proposal?”

“Not a bit of it; they chose some paltry botanical professor of a Scotchman, who only understood dry technical points, and ready ‘cut and dried’ rules, and had never like myself—(ahem!)—launched into the nobler fields of ‘experiment’—the only sure test!”

“Disgusting! — ungracious!” exclaimed Renmore.

“Positive fact!” said Mr. Lawton.

“Mere jealousy!—rank envy!” rejoined Renmore. “But what says Pope?—

‘Envy will merit, like its shade, pursue,
But, like the shadow, proves the substance true.’”

“True, true!—no doubt of it!” replied the worthy experimentalist, with the amusing self-complacency which made him often ridiculous, but

without which he would have been almost devoid of "character"—nothing.

"Meantime," he continued, "mind, I did not answer their meanness by turning my back on them, but still patronize their society. And, in fact, it is their flower-show at which Laura is to exhibit."

"You mean on the occasion of the 'regatta' on lake Derwentwater?" asked Renmore.

"Yes, yes; on the 20th; child—didn't you say so?"

"Yes, that is the day; but I fear my 'specimens' will hardly secure the prize."

"No doubt of it," exclaimed the sanguine sire.

"I should think few lovelier flowers can be exhibited than those Blacktarn may boast!" said Renmore, bowing to Laura, who now retired, for it was growing late, for the night, blushing as she went, and not unworthily applying the compliment to her own charms.

"Few lovelier, indeed," thought Renmore to himself, after she was gone, "except *one*;"—and that *one*—reader, it is needless for us to explain, (if we have already laid open to you his heart aright)—was Gertrude.

To her his thoughts "untravelling" recurred, when, having wished his host good-night, he was now left alone, and communing in the silence of his chamber with his own thoughts. He could not

sufficiently deplore the dangerous circumstance of his enemy Quandish's having discovered the mutual attachment of himself and Gertrude. It may well be imagined,—whatever might be the endeavours on the part of his worthy host to render his visit at Blacktarn agreeable,—whatever charm, again, might be afforded to it by the society of one so fair and pleasing as Laura,—yet that the secret cause of his disquiet as regarded Gertrude must have been too strong and sincere to permit him to feel it so gratifying as it would otherwise have been.

It was long before he could close his lids in sleep, as he remained thinking how far she might be suffering vexation from the austere lecturings of her parent, in consequence of the discovery of her daughter's attachment towards himself; and he could only console himself by hoping that she would, whenever an opportunity was afforded her, repair to Lorton, and seek refuge with the good curate, where he hoped to join and make her his own.

More pleasing than those of her father's guest were the reflections of Laura. That they were bestowed on himself, and to his advantage, may readily be supposed, from the interest which he has been witnessed as already having awakened in her. Deservedly had that interest been strengthened by the increased experience which the preceding

morning had afforded of his many engaging qualifications.

Such were the thoughts that made "the present" smile for Laura, which the fond dream of her heart whispered might possibly be the happy harbinger of a yet more radiant future.

Blind as we are!—How would Laura's radiant dream have been overcast could she but have known the secrets that possessed the heart of him to whom she felt her own thus tacitly inclining—could she but have known, too, how slender was the sway which the thought of herself maintained in it; but if, more than all, she had known that the object of her latent esteem was the "notorious Hatfield himself!"

But this consideration involves circumstances of pain to which the course of our story may possibly lead too soon. We would gladly shut our eyes, as yet, to those "shadows" which "coming events" already "cast before" them.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wandering at eve, with finely frenzied eye,
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood !
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood,
Then weep aloud. . . .” COLERIDGE.

MORN smiled again on Blacktarn, and on Laura Lawton. The Arcadia of those russet slopes, those sunny glades, those sequestered haunts of wood and wave, all rejoicing in their golden summer glow, was not more joyous than the Arcadia of her own heart, which was now a bright world to her of sensations and prospects, all pleasurable as new. Life wore a novel aspect to her, under the various new impressions, springs of thought, feeling, and association, which the companionship and conversation of her father's guest unfolded to her. That confidence in him, which it was the dangerous quality of his easy ascendancy of mind and manner to win, became

strengthened hour by hour in the breast of Laura. The thoughts and feelings suggested by this or that remark or topic were uttered undisguisedly, and as to a monitor, to correct or approve, as it might be: and while she only considered or owned to herself that she admired, she in reality loved. She mentally leaned on him; and when the mind leans, the heart leans too.

While the father saw the progress of her acquaintance with pleasure, he felt that its increase or "improvement" (as he would say) was solely attributable to the natural undisguised qualities—the intrinsic distinction of manner and address in his guest, which commanded interest. There was no effort to "render himself agreeable;" no "advances" of any kind. The most punctilious politeness and deference were observed, in consistency with the most entire familiarity, graced by intelligence and cheerfulness.

Such a manner would have disarmed all apprehension or vigilance on the part of a parent, since it was so entirely the opposite to design, even supposing such parent had wished to exercise vigilance. But on the contrary, in the present instance, Mr. Lawton was tacitly pleased to see Laura and the Colonel becoming every day better friends. And in fact, he felt now, at the conclusion of two or three days, that he was so well acquainted with his guest, such was the cheerful ease and frankness

of his manner, that no closer bond, not even that of son-in-law, could make them better acquainted; for that such a contingency as the peculiar bond just surmised *did* suggest itself to the dreams of the worthy Lawton is quite certain. And very gratifying dreams were they; for not only was no man ever more “to his liking,” as he would express it, than the Colonel, but there was no small distinction in having for a son-in-law “the Honourable Colonel Renmore, M.P., of Clan-renmore, County Caithness, &c.”

Ah! indeed, the world of delusion is a happy one; but the worst of it is, it is so soon clouded,—so soon, to use a favourite expression of the present day, “experiences a reaction.”

With a young and sensitive spirit such as Laura's, it is more than probable that, passing her days for the first time in her life in companionship with a handsome and distinguished person such as Renmore, she would soon have been “over head and ears” in love; but the probability becomes yet more certain when his eminent qualifications of mind and manner are considered in addition. In fact, take any two people of opposite sexes, and of ages suitable to each other, and place them in each other's society, in a spot where few others interfere with them,—such as the Blacktarn fastness, or a country curacy, for example,—and so dependent

on each other will they become, that love and matrimony ensue almost as matters of course ! Be warned, young curates, of this plain as awful truth, ere ye hurry into that “barathrum” of woe—an improvident marriage !

In the present instance, we cannot, then, be surprised at Laura’s being sensible of the impression we have stated ; and by this time (for Renmore’s sojourn had now extended to some days) she was too conscious that the feeling which she had hitherto only been willing to recognise as esteem, interest, friendship, or admiration, claimed now a yet tenderer and stronger appellation. If, then, our hero is an involuntary accessory to the entertainment of such sentiments towards himself, let him not be blamed if any unhappiness should be the possible result.

No ; if we have challenged for him the claim of possessing one attribute more redeeming than another in his character, it was that lofty feeling, that devotion which he evinced towards the one being who was in herself a world for him, which repaid him for the loss of a world whose good word he felt he had forfeited, whether from misfortune or guilty purpose we will not now stay to inquire. At present, it is but due to him to exhibit his consistency with that feeling which has heretofore placed him before us in so redeeming a light.

In the teeth of danger, he has been seen lingering round the track of Gertrude. If "Circumstance" *alone* had whispered to him to make her his own, and secure her fortune—surely it now whispered that such an opportunity of benefiting himself was much more largely offered to him! No; much more than any dictates of interest were those of the passion which held him to Gertrude; or else there was little to prevent his securing the heiress of Blacktarn, and turning his back on all the professions he had made to the humbler, yet also lovelier maiden of Buttermere.

How easy would it have been for him to have engaged to himself the hand, no less than the heart, of the simple, unsuspecting, confiding Laura, and secured to himself the powerful aid and interest of her father to have covered his retreat abroad, for the sake of his child, whenever the fearful circumstance of her husband's identity should transpire. He might have secured her hand, and proceeded (on any plausible excuse) abroad at once, had he been so inclined,—had he not loved Gertrude too truly to be able so far to forget himself not less than her: Mike would have added, "had not it been 'his destiny' to do as he did."

What inducements, too, were there to his pride! The heiress of a country gentleman of good family was at his disposal! What associations, flattering to

his self-love, were not offered, as he gazed on those venerable walls of the old mansion, with its twisted antique chimneys, and its embrowned hues—those glades where the hoar oaks and russet hawthorns spread—those ample domains around! To think that he could, with no effort at all, make them, and the fair claimant of them, all his own! Effort, say we? On the contrary, the heart and mind both of the sire and daughter, too simple, too plain, too confiding, to wear any disguise, were laid open before him, and invited him to make the advance.

Such thoughts, if possibly they passed across Renmore's mind, were but part of the "phantasmagoria" of those visions that float before the mind in its varied train of musings and associations; and all the dream vanished as the form of Gertrude called his heart to bow to it, and own that it was "all" for which he lived. And if Renmore had been a villain stigmatized by worse crimes even than those of which he was conscious, we should forget them when regarding him under the light of this one fairest trait!

But to place ourselves again with our hero by the side of Laura. All was sunny and lovely around her, and she walked in the light of joy and seeming security, along those sweet glades, buoyant in step and heart as the fawn that played

across her woodland path, which reckes not of the ambush of the "keeper" who is already levelling his rifle at her from behind the oak covert at the forest side.

There was a rude hut constructed of logs and trunks of wood, transverse and perpendicular; roofed, too, with masses of oak bark, and fitted with rustic seats placed in a circular form within. This rude edifice Laura and our hero had reached, as they wandered to enjoy the extreme variety and wild beauties of the scene that was spread out before them. The lovely haunt of Crummock water was visible from this part of the Blacktarn premises, and Laura smiled as she looked at it, with reminiscences of many a pleasant aquatic and fishing party that she had known on its fair flood.

"There is the little island at the further end where Dr. Esdaile, when he visits us, resorts to fish. See! you can discern his boat dancing about at the length of the chain that holds it to the rock-bank. He has often rowed me and papa to that island, to give us a display of his adroitness as a char-angler. We shall, shortly after the regatta on Derwentwater, have our friends from Keswick, Mr. Golefield, Routhmore, and Dr. Esdaile, all over at Blacktarn, I hope. And if you should be with us, we will hold a celebration on the island, that you may see what a charming spot it is to

pass an evening, when the sunset quite crimsons both wood and water !”

Just at this moment, some voices were heard of persons talking ; and presently who should exhibit themselves climbing up the ascent by which the hut was gained, but Mr. Lawton, accompanied by the very persons whose names had just escaped the lips of Laura.

“ Hoa ! hoa ! my sylvan goddess,” exclaimed Mr. Lawton in his somewhat heavy playfulness ; “ you have made your temple here.”

“ Yes,” interposed Golefield, “ and not without a worshipper,” as he looked towards our hero and smiled ; while he added, as he turned to Routhmore, “ Ah ! then, the report must be true, after all.”

“ Indeed ! yes,” replied Routhmore ; “ and we must congratulate Colonel Renmore on the circumstance.”

“ Congratulate me !” exclaimed our hero in some surprise.

“ Yes ; congratulate you,” said Golefield.

“ Indeed !” replied Renmore ; “ I am not conscious of being so fortunate as to deserve congratulation on any subject that I am aware of, except generally the pleasurable sojourn I have been making these few days past”—(for a week had nearly slipped away)—“ with my friends at Blacktarn and its vicinity.”

“ Indeed ! when you say at Blacktarn, we may readily believe you,” said Routhmore ; “ but for my part, though from a little modesty you may not avow it, yet I can assure you your happiness is no secret in the neighbourhood.”

“ My happiness ?” exclaimed Renmore, laughing, and not understanding the drift of his friend’s allusion, or whether he was only indulging in a little good-humoured pleasantry.

“ Why, what ?—eh ?—what happiness ?” asked Mr. Lawton, equally in the dark ; while Laura also requested to be enlightened, as she joined with her father in saying they should both be happy to congratulate their guest, when they were made acquainted with the causes that deserved gratulation.

“ Well, this is excellent !” exclaimed Golefield. “ Here we are at the ‘ fountain-head,’ as one should suppose, whence this happy intelligence must have emanated, and lo ! we find its stream either dry or dammed up.”

“ Pray be less enigmatical !” said Renmore ; “ and relieve myself, and Mr. and Miss Lawton, of our common ignorance on this happy piece of intelligence.”

“ Ah !” observed Routhmore, “ it is often the case that reports, happy or unhappy, reach the object of them after all the rest of the world !”

“ I am sure you may apply that very just remark, then, to myself,” answered Renmore; “ so, pray, what is the report ?”

“ Why,” continued Golefield, looking at our hero and his host and hostess, “ if I have your permission to announce it——”

“ Certainly ! certainly !” was the reply of the whole three.

“ Why, then, it is that you, Colonel, are engaged to Miss Lawton ; and, yet more, that the wedding-day even is already fixed upon.”

Of course, the parties whom this piece of intelligence more particularly affected looked at each other in a spell of mute inquiry and surprise,—Laura’s cheek being pale and flushed by turns,—her worthy sire not exactly “ knowing how to look,” as his mouth and eyes appeared to vie with each other as to which should be stretched open the widest ;—while our hero, being the first to regain his composure, smiled, and remarked, with much good-humour and good-breeding, but less anxiety or warmth of interest in the matter than it would have flattered the feelings of Laura and her father to observe.

“ Engaged, indeed, I must consider myself ! for who that is able to appreciate whatever is kind or charming, can visit Blacktarn and not feel that his esteem and remembrance have been “ en-

gaged" by both the one and the other of these qualities?"

So saying, he bowed to Miss Lawton, whose lip quivered, as she looked down to the ground with a confusion that, if it heightened her charms, evinced more of pain than pleasure; while Mr. Lawton first looked at her, and then on all the party round, with an expression both of perplexity and surprise, as he asked—

"Why, *who* can have raised such a report as this?"

"We heard it from Miss Howbiggen."

"Miss Howbiggen!" exclaimed Lawton. "Oh! *she* was the authority!—ay, that accounts for the circumstance. She is a very worthy person, (ahem!) but a little too fond of inquiring into matters—(ahem!)—that do not too much concern her; and (ahem!) putting her own constructions on them!"

"It must be so, then," observed Routhmore. "The hospitable and worthy spinster had expressed to me the other day how much she had wished to have the honour of Colonel Renmore's company on a visit to herself and brother; but she went on to complain that he had been run away with by her Blacktarn friends, and then indulged in speculations, which I need not mention, on the 'happiness' which she imagined was so probable an event that

she at length believed (I suppose) that it must be true, and so reported it as such."

"Yes, yes!" said Golefield; "such is the power of fancy, that it makes you in love with its gay illusions, and keeps them so long in view that you at length persuade yourself they are real. So much can the mind be perverted."

Such, indeed, was the solution of this interesting piece of intelligence; and thus was its explanation delivered, with sundry remarks conveyed by our hero in good-humoured pleasantry, at the expense of the spirit of "gossip," as the whole party now walked on together.

They had soon arrived at the border of the wood below, where a little wicket opened from the park paling on the high road, which here branched off in two directions.

"And now, Mr. Lawton, we must wish you good-bye," said Golefield, as he proceeded towards the wicket.

"What! going to leave us?" replied the hospitable lord of Blacktarn. "Will you not stay, you and Mr. Routhmore, and dine? Colonel Renmore's being with us will surely tempt you to stay."

But these gentlemen were unable to do themselves that pleasure, as they informed Mr. Lawton that they were on their way to visit their brother bard, Woodsland, at his retreat near Windermere,

and expected that Dr. Esdaile would join them on the way.

In fact, they had not originally intended deviating from their track, (which they had done in calling at Blacktarn,) but were unable to pass near it without "looking in," and expressing their congratulations on the report which has been referred to, as existing only in the imaginative genius of Miss Howbiggen.

We may here remark, it is possible that a little inkling of jealousy, (already heretofore testified,) as regarded the heiress of Blacktarn, and the attentions paid her by our hero, might have awakened a certain sense of what her brother termed "fidget" in Miss Howbiggen's bosom, at the continued stay of our hero at Blacktarn; for so she termed it, though but of a few days' duration. And hence, after having placed her own construction on the matter, she had whispered about the report we have heard, in order to learn whether it would prove true or false, as it should be contradicted or not. We do not say such was positively the case, but we only offer a picture of a certain style of "manœuvre" but too often witnessed in life, and, unhappily, too often the cause of much misinterpretation and mischief.

Accordingly, Golefield and Routhmore took leave of Mr. and Miss Lawton, who returned to the Blacktarn mansion, while Renmore, promising his

fair hostess and host that he should speedily rejoin them, yielded to the request of the "Genii" to afford them the pleasure of his society a short distance on their ramble towards the Westmoreland boundary, where a speedier conveyance than that of their legs would expedite their progress from the next town in that direction.

As Renmore passed with them from the wicket, he inadvertently took the wrong turning of the two branches of the road, and was recalled by Golefield, who told him, "That was the Cockermouth road;—this," he added, "is our way,"—turning into the other, and followed by our hero.

"Oh, *that* is the way to Cockermouth, is it?" observed Renmore, as he seemed to take note of the objects that marked the road, which, as a stranger, he might very well mistake, since both lines of road ran nearly parallel for a short distance, and no hand-post lent its aid to relieve his uncertainty.

"And what other 'reports,' pray, are there afloat in the little world of Buttermere?" asked Renmore, now coming up to his companions.

"Why, one that, no doubt, must set that little world 'agog,'" replied Golefield, "since it announces the probable marriage of the celebrated Beauty with——"

"With whom?" asked Renmore, eagerly.

"The preacher—one Quandish!"

“Impossible!” exclaimed Renmore, with increased earnestness; but checking himself, he continued, in a more composed tone, “and have we Miss Howbiggen’s authority for this bulletin too?”

“Upon my word, I don’t know,” said Golefield; “but I was as much surprised as you can be to hear it. Such a charming creature victimized to so ungainly a Goth! It is as bad as the sacrifice of Iphigenia.”

“I understand it was her mother’s doing,” added Routhmore, “and no doubt conscientious.”

“Why, what?—are the Preacher and Gertrude—are ‘Beauty and the Beast’—actually married, then?” asked Renmore, his lip quivering, and his brow becoming ashen colour, as his heart sunk within him. “Well, I must say” (he continued, endeavouring to rally) “she was worthy a better alliance. Such a fairy of romance as herself to be charmed from her wild haunt by the spell of so uncouth a soothsayer as this!”

“Nay; we may invest her with the light of romance, dazzled as we are by her beauty,” said Routhmore; “but after all, she is but a creature of flesh and blood—a denizen of the thorny path of life and its realities. And if the man is a decent, respectable person, why she plays her part in life as well in giving him her hand, as if she sought suitors more glittering indeed, but after all more hollow.”

So said Routhmore, and Golefield replied, "Ay, ay; if her happiness is gained in this alliance,—if she is contented with it, and the man respectable, why, she is as well wedded to this person as if he had been an Apollo or an Adonis, or any fitter suitor for a creature of such loveliness as far as our fancies might suggest."

Renmore's lip was curled with a sneer, as he repeated to himself Routhmore's words, "more glittering, but more hollow," as he thought on the character of Quandish. "True, true," he added aloud to Golefield's remark; "if the girl is happy and contented, why, well and good; but I can still scarcely credit the report:"—which he certainly did not, or he would not have delayed long in hurrying back to Buttermere to learn the truth at any hazard.

And now they came to a lovely spot, where they all involuntarily stopped short, and paused in delight to contemplate the beauty of the scenery. A lovely sheet of water, which the sunset-gleam lit up in its purple glory, formed a translucent pavement, as it were, before a peak-shaped and pyramidal mass of rock, like an old Indian temple. And here a clue was at once given to the labyrinth of "golden dreams," through which the fancies of the brother bards were forthwith led, as they stood musing over the fairy maze.

“This is a haunt where we feel we could linger for ever, through blessed hours ‘ne’er felt too long!’ where we could live and die without any curiosity to search for scenes of greater interest, or any hope of finding haunts more lovely,” exclaimed Golefield, this youthful bard being the first to break from the spell of silence. “Apart from the world, I ask no companion but the delectable thought of security from the world’s intrusion,—the content and rapture that these lovely wildernesses inspire!”

“Now, for my part,” said Routhmore, “though I am scarcely less alive to their charm than you can be, my dear Golefield, yet this passion for solitude with which they make you so in love as a poet, is after all a dangerous one. For man, as destined to play a social part, and as one of a set of beings mutually dependent on each other, the thoughts bred in solitude, however charming it may be, engender a furtive disease, and an impatience of contact with our fellow-men, that is sadly akin to savageness.”

“Ay, you wrote,” replied Golefield, “a charming stanza or two in illustration of this feeling. If you have never heard them, Colonel Renmore, you will thank me for repeating them to you.”

Renmore expressed the pleasure it would afford him to hear them, and thus the lines flowed, as Golefield gave them voice:—

I.

"If, through the boundless charm of Nature's reign,
 Lost o'er her Beauty's savage haunt and lone,
 'Tis sweet to shun the busy crowd and vain—
 The discord wide that swells the city drone—
 And vindicate a freedom, ill-foregone!
 Alone to linger, yet shall profit less!
 Alone to commune—though for e'er it please—
 Flatters too much the native savageness,
 And distant thought that, furtive, breeds disease!
 But with some lov'd one near, to share the wild—
 A guardian spirit, thrice the track to bless—
 Whatever stern hath solitude, beguil'd
 It loses its worse sway, as She hath smil'd!
 Rescued its gloom where the lone shadows press;
 Exalted all the charm, sooth'd all the weariness.

II.

"Joys, too, our Love of Self!—forbad to waste
 Our rapture, breath'd unheard o'er that fair bound!
 For, now, our bliss outpours it thrice to taste
 That charm, in the delights *Reflection* found
 In One that feels with us—in One we love!
 And witness'd, amid all those treasures given—
 Or joy of earth, or gladdening sky above—
 Herself the dearest boon consign'd of heaven!
Her presence aiding, with new bliss, the spell
 Breath'd o'er yon lovely maze, if add she all,
 Stirs in the heart the language musical
 Of social throbs whose chord had falter'd slack,
 But that *her* tones, sweet chiding, bade it swell!
 Still! her harmonious challenge holds us back
 To throbs humane! *That* heart is still our Home!
That music warns us, wide howe'er we roam,
 Ne'er yet to lose sight of Life's genial bourn,
 Hated and hating, self-condemned to mourn,
 Lost wanderers o'er Nature's lonely track."

“The sentiment they convey is most just,” observed Renmore, as the poet concluded the lines; “the solitary mania is a grievous mistake as a source of pleasure; for the gratification of our self-love in the *reflection* of our feelings (as the stanzas describe) is surely an increased source of pleasure.”

“No doubt of it,” said Routhmore; “and happy would you be, I was just thinking, had our congratulations not long ago been less mistaken!”

“What,” replied Renmore, smiling; “you mean in being possessed of so charming a partner in the pleasures of these beautiful retreats, as Laura Lawton.”

“Precisely! the gentleman who shall boast of winning the heiress of Blacktarn is to be envied. Dr. Esdaile, who between ourselves has no small ‘sentiment’ for Miss Lawton, turned quite pale as Miss Howbiggen suggested the report to us, as we called on her in passing. Our friend Esdaile was there on a morning visit to his patient her brother.”

“Well; Dr. Esdaile shews his taste in admiring the lady,” replied Renmore; and willing to turn the conversation away to some other subject, he turned round to Golefield and reminded him he had never seen the verses he had promised to shew him, on their first meeting near the precipice or crag which

suggested those associations that formed the subject of the poem.

Golefield accordingly gratified our hero's request by reading them; and after various remarks had passed to which they gave rise, the conversation recurred to Blacktarn and its inmates. Renmore remarked how estimable a being his host at Blacktarn was, and continued—

“Yes; despite his singularity, he is a really worthy man. We have all our foibles, and there are, perhaps, few so harmless as Mr. Lawton's; though to hear Dr. Esdaile talk of him in his characteristic way makes one smile. The facetious Doctor assured me that our friend Lawton would descant as solemnly on the ‘experiment’ of growing potatoes by planting the ‘ball,’ instead of the ‘root,’ as if he were discussing the India Bill or the Newtonian System.”

“Yes,” said Routhmore, good-humouredly, “certainly, the stream of philosophy acts on our worthy friend of Blacktarn much as that of Hippocrene on some bards—it turns their heads, and impairs rather than exalts their efforts, since it is too powerful for them to bear. But what of that? Life must have some resource; and not only is Mr. Lawton's ‘experimental’ mania a harmless one, since it is at his own expense, but even praiseworthy, as far as the object (however ill-

answered) is concerned—which is, to benefit society.”

“It is the old story of human vanity,” remarked Golefield; “we all, in our way, desire to distinguish ourselves. How can it be otherwise, when there is such emulation around us? Consider,” he added, smiling, “the present is essentially an age of ‘luminaries.’ When could England ever exhibit such a display of intellectual light as coruscates in a Burke, a Sheridan, a Fox, a Pitt? Young Canning, too, is urging forward on the dazzling career of renown, and promises to be no unworthy successor of these great names, one day or other.”

“The names you mention,” replied Renmore, “exhibit a galaxy, indeed. Such a court, too, as the prince’s has not been witnessed in England since that of Charles II. And the style of conversation, of wit, of life, at present not a little assimilates to that of Charles. The conversation of a Sheridan, a Hanger, a Townshend, can scarcely have been exceeded in sprightliness of remark and repartee by that of the circle of the merry monarch. But it is not so gross, though the mode of life is scarcely less dissipated.”

“And what are all their courts, their glare of magnificence or gaiety, to the splendour of these glowing beauteous halls of Nature around us?” said Golefield, breaking out, “suo more,” in this apos-

trophe, after a fit of musing. "It makes me smile to think how ambitious many a flatterer about the court is, to form one of that princely circle we have just been speaking of. The thought, I say, makes me smile. For my part, a humble individual as I am, and retired from mankind, my ambition is more than sufficiently answered and blessed, in the enjoyment of pomp, magnificence, and charm, such as these rude yet lovely wilds afford, and where I am glad to dwell!"

"No doubt, no doubt," said Renmore; "but were you a worldly, ambitious man, you would as much despise this secluded life you now glory in, as you at present look with philosophic contempt on the false glare of dissipation and the glitter of courts."

"Golefield may well hold such gauds as these cheap," observed Routhmore. "*His* court is his Mind! There is *his* royal palace, whose vast dome is wide and boundless in its conception as these heavens around us, and arrayed in the colours Fancy frets it withal—bright as those chequered beauties of the golden and azure skies!"

"Ah, my friend," replied Golefield, calmly, "you speak with too much partiality. . . . Yet who," he continued, after a pause, his countenance glowing with enthusiasm and sensibility, "who will tell me—except perhaps Dr. Esdaile—that our

mind is a mere result of a perfected organization of this corporeal frame? Nay, it rather spiritualizes the clay-frame, than the latter materializes *it*."

"The worthy Doctor speaks, doubtless," observed Renmore, "as a physician and anatomist in taking this view."

Just here the conversation was arrested, and the attention of the party directed to a singular figure, or rather "appearance," which, at first sight, it was difficult to describe, or declare "what it could be." It was floating along down the stream of Crummock water, on whose banks the party now were, and was making for the landing-place, near which they stood. The figure in question had the appearance at first sight of a huge buoy or butt, from its rotundity of shape, floating on the water; but on a nearer inspection, it turned out to be the somewhat round and puffy figure of a man, squatted in one of those little boats constructed for a single person, and called by the fishermen of the north "thoracles," or more properly, "corricles."*

"Why, I declare here is our merry Doctor come to join us (as we had expected) on our way

* From "corbula," a basket. These small fishing boats are constructed of wicker-work, and compactly lined with leather, very much like the basket-hilt of a "single-stick." "Corriculum" is a diminutive: like "curriculum" for "currus."

to see Woodsland!" exclaimed Routhmore, as the little man now towed his boat, or rather "basket," up to the bank, and set foot on "terra firma."

"You see, I had not forgotten you," said Esdaile to the two brother Genii; "but having a visit to pay to a person not far from these banks of Crummock, I was unable to accompany you from Keswick; but knowing the route you would take, I thought I would meet you at this spot, and during the interval of my waiting for your coming up, I have been paddling about the stream in this odd little fishing-boat, and throwing a 'fly' wherever I thought a char might rise."

So saying, he consigned the care of the "corricle" and his fishing implements to a little lad who now met them on the bank; and having done this, he proceeded, followed by his inseparable companion, Bryan his dog, with the rest of the party.

Renmore, however, was unable to accompany them any further, as it was time for him, he considered, to be finding his way back to Blacktarn; so he took his leave, not without much regret on the part of Esdaile and the two "Genii" that he could not proceed with them to the sacred haunt of that third "Genius" of their fraternity—Woodsland. However, he promised to pay his respects at that shrine "one of these days," if an opportunity were afforded him; and with this he returned on his way to Blacktarn, where we shall

speedily rejoin him, after having, for a short space, lingered behind with Esdaile and his gifted comrades.

It must not be omitted by us to state, that Esdaile seemed in no small degree interested in inquiring as to the truth of that "matrimonial report" already mentioned, as regarded our hero and Miss Lawton. Whether our surmise (already expressed) be well founded or not, that the Doctor entertained a certain "kindly sentiment" towards the fair Laura, we cannot as yet determine; but assuredly he appeared relieved when he found that Miss Howbiggen's report was without authority.

"We were just talking of you," said Routhmore to Esdaile, "as we descried you."

"I hope you were saying no harm of me—no treason, I trust?" replied the merry Doctor.

"Indeed, we were proceeding to upset your 'material system,' as if it had been a 'card-castle,'" said Routhmore.

"What! and myself out of the way to defend it? O grievous wrong!"

"Nay; now you are here, good Doctor," said Golefield, smiling, "you can defend it, so please you."

"Defend it! ay, and so I could, and at some length too, were it worth while. Yes; in a few words could I convict ye,—proud ones though ye be," continued the banterer; "ay, and with but a shadow,—that is, if a 'dream' is 'a shadow.'"

“Ay, ay!” replied Golefield, “the mind is at work even in sleep, and watches sentinel over its poor sentry-box of clay. Thus will I answer your ‘instance’ of a dream!”

“Hold, hold! you give a different turn to my reference to the ‘dreamy topic.’ It is no agency of spirit, if I must speak, that is proved in dreams, begging your pardon. On the contrary, they are but a ‘material’ result, produced through the medium of the senses. Bless me! I could make you dream, any of you, just as I pleased, by administering such or such things, to influence variously the ‘bodily habit.’ So, again, I need scarcely say, dreams arise from ideas ‘stamped’ on the brain, which have been previously introduced there at any time through the medium of the senses; all which militates against the faith of ‘spirit’ acting in dreams. Come, my ‘dreamer,’” he jocularly added to Golefield, “not all your high flights can lift me away from this rock of my philosophy. A—hem!” he added, imitating Mr. Lawton’s imposing style.

“*Stamped* on the brain! What mean you?” said Golefield. “*I* say, the *stamp*, if there *is* any, is the information given of its presence, by the presiding spirit, which wakes up its playful or awful thoughts, in dreams, occupying itself ‘divinely,’ while it compasses the sleeping body, and dis-

dains to disturb in its repose the frail clay that must house it for a time."

"Ay! what do you mean by 'stamped'?" asked Routhmore. "You really talk as if you were speaking of the impression of a seal. Explain you! Areed!"

"Why, to be sure," replied Esdaile, "objects conveyed to the brain (and Locke would approve, if he heard me) through the medium of the sight, leave the impression of what the 'mind,' or 'cerebral action,' works upon—of what is called 'ideas;' these leave a sensible impression, or image, really analogous to that of a seal-stamp on wax. Memory is nothing more than the treasuring up of ideas, or rather forms or images of things and circumstances, conveyed originally to the brain, (or, if you please, 'cerebral nervous action;') and hence, we may say almost, literally 'stamped' on it. There is no denying, then, that what you would call 'spiritual action,' or 'action of mind,' (whether in dreams, or as in the instance of memory, and to these we may add both 'fancy' and 'association,') owes its operation and agency to a communication, originally, from without, and through the Senses. It is most amusing," continued our merry materialist, "to see, sometimes, how a fact or circumstance that has happened long ago, suddenly arises in our mind, (or 'action of brain,') on some little

hinge of association being given for its revival. It really does appear almost as if the 'impression' or 'image' stamped on my brain (or, as you would express it, 'living in my recollection') were something more than merely 'metaphysical'—I mean more 'material;' and that an impression was retained, just as the impress of a seal. The essential result of the impression made from an external influence originally is precisely the same."

"Come, come," said Routhmore, "I can't agree in this. Mind must be '*à priori*,' for how, pray, could a field or house make any impression on the mere physical 'lens' of the eye, unless a spirit operated to take pleasure or feel curiosity in such object? I grant you that as far as our minds are conversant with things and objects, they are in great measure so, according to such external acceptance and nomenclature as Convention has attached to them,—which is not only an external influence, but an artificial one. But though the mind looks thus on things and objects presented to it under this conventional guise or acceptance, yet this circumstance is no proof that the mind, also, derives all information from what education gives it, as telling it what objects are named or used for. For instance, Mind, looking out through the senses, would see the animal we call a 'horse,' and reason on its symmetry and strength, as well as if conven-

tion had not given a peculiar name to the thing, or attached a peculiar set of associations to it. For, to what, let me ask, did Convention originally owe all the artificial acceptations that objects have received?—to MIND, to be sure! You may cavil about the word, ‘ideas,’ but if you take this to mean the same thing as ‘mind,’ and hence say that this is not innate, you are wrong; for if mind were not innate, what would you have operating within you, to make the boasted channel of the senses of any use?”

So spoke Routhmore, with his usual acuteness and energy, while the materialist replied, as he shook his head and smiled, in token of his being yet unconvinced of mind being ‘à priori’—“Your last observation begs the whole question; and the grand difficulty of the circumstance—as to whether mind is, as you say, a ‘thing à priori,’ or more aptly coming under my denomination of a ‘result of cerebral adaptation’—can never be settled, I fear: for ‘life,’ merely, or ‘animation,’ is another thing than ‘mind’ and its operations, since in infants and idiotcy, ‘life’ performs its functions, but not the brain or mind.”

“Well, well!” interposed Golefield, who had been listening with much interest to his friend Routhmore, and now took up the argument quite in his own characteristic and fanciful way; “‘I

would rather,' as Cicero says, 'err with Plato, than think truly with any others!' And if my friend Routhmore errs, I must err, too, with him! As we cannot, Doctor, unriddle the difficulty you state, why I, for my part, would prefer leaving it in its uncertainty, and fly to the *certain* joy I possess, in the nobler and more exalted exercise of that which I feel, and call 'mind.' Yes; under this consciousness, I feel I am—though an inhabitant of earth—yet no mere 'thing of clay.' Does not the grandeur of this scene,—whether illumined by yonder sun that now sets before us, or witnessed in the solemn beauty and awful repose of night,—does it not admonish me—does not the whispering of its spirit inform me that *I* am a spirit too?"

"Fancy, fancy!" exclaimed the Doctor, smiling admiringly at the dreamer, who continued, not heeding him.

"I must be so,—to feel this very tacit intelligence of Things that exist *not* to the mere senses? Mark this! There is a certain inexplicable joy in this tacit communing of spirit with spirit, as though it were a 'kindred love' that greeted us! There is an 'information' in this tacit converse which the mind recognises, quite independently of anything it gleans from without! To heed any material or 'individual' object would break the

chain of its spiritual train of musings. Mark this, again! In retiring to itself, it meets that kindred spirit, too, with which it holds this exalted commune, at once harmonious and mystic. In doing so, it listens to the instinct of its divine, its spiritual nature. It is alien from earth and objects earthly, as taught us by the rules of convention, or derived from the senses. I never move," continued the enthusiast, as his whole soul beamed through his eyes and countenance,—“I never move, nor walk abroad, nor commune by myself, through these ‘spirit-haunted,’ lovely wilds, without feeling I am ‘never less alone than when alone.’ I feel myself, as it were, a metaphysical Scipio—whose companions are essences not of this sphere—whose actions, though they be conducted in secret and solitude, (as far as human supervision is concerned,) are yet exposed and laid bare to the eyes of myriads of spirits and essences that hover round us, sublimely illustrating the tale of the Roman who said, that he ‘wished his house were of glass, that all might see into his privacy.’ Even so are all our secret movements laid open to the host of spirits that throng the invisible world around us: the greater world, I may add, and in which the visible, sensible, and material world is but a speck!”

“He is on his hobby now,” said Esdaile, in a lowered tone, to Routhmore. “You can’t stop

him ! Look at his eye !—his rapt mood ! A fine creature ! Why you might laugh and talk loud without disturbing him. He would have no ears for you. He is listening to his spiritual friends and their communing.”

“ Hush ! let us hear him. He will launch from one dream and one speculation to another, now he has fairly mounted on the wing of fancy, from this lower earth. A good idea, that of a ‘ metaphysical Scipio,’ and his turning the Roman’s maxim, ‘ never less alone than when alone,’ to illustrate his own spiritual companionship.”

“ All fancy, fancy ! but let us listen ; he is speeding on again.”

But here we must leave the Doctor and Routhmore dwelling on the words of the enthusiast, as they proceeded on their way, which they expected now soon to bring to a conclusion for the present day. The pretty little town was indeed in sight which was to be the goal of their expedition thus far.

To rejoin our hero, — on his return to his host and Laura, he was greeted by them with all cordiality, not unmixed with a certain good-humoured upbraiding, that he should have protracted his ramble to so late an hour ; for it was now dark. An excuse, however, was readily admitted, when it was considered who the companions were that had tempted him to stray so far

with them. And possibly, from not being too well acquainted with the passes, he might have occupied more time in finding his way back to Blacktarn, after quitting his comrades, than would have been the case had he known that wild district better.

The warmth of the atmosphere that night was so great that the party were glad to have the drawing-room windows thrown open. They were those long "folding-door" sashes reaching to the ground; and the whole 'trio' were glad to adjourn from the room to take a turn on the wide gravel terrace that skirted the side of the house; the space beyond being occupied by the "chase," where the aged hawthorns, with their fantastically-wreathed boughs, gleamed pallidly through the uncertain moonlight. But all on a sudden, as they were engaged in conversation, the attention of Mr. Lawton was called to the circumstance of a huge and lurid volume of flame rising through the dim air.

"Good heavens! one of the barns, or a rick, perhaps, on the farm premises, must be on fire!"

"It must be so!" said Renmore, as he instantly sallied forth towards the spot, accompanied by Mr. Lawton, while Laura remained on the gravel terrace, watching the "portent of the blaze," and awaiting their return with tidings as to the particulars of the disaster. She watched the forms of

Renmore and her father as far as the uncertain light would permit her to trace them; and they now appeared to be lost in the shadows of a thick copse of beech and oak, through which a pathway led to the farm premises of the estate. She stood anxiously looking for their return, when she heard a step rapidly advancing behind her, and on turning round, shrieked, to see a figure disguised in the black mask common amongst the highwaymen of the day. This person, regardless of her cries, and apparently reckless of pursuit, snatched her up in his arms, and hurrying her along to the corner of the terrace that was nearest the drive leading out of the park, placed her before him on a horse that was on the spot, attached by the bridle to the bough of a tree.

In an instant, the echoes of the chase were resounding rapidly to the clatter of his hoofs. Away the rider plunged forward on his desperate course, with his lovely charge, whose cries had elicited from him no infraction of the silence observed on his part; and by which her alarm had been, perhaps, increased. But her terror soon rendered her no less mute than her abductor; for, fainting and pale she now lay on the saddle-bow, like a lily drooping beneath the wan light and terror of tempest skies.

CHAPTER IX.

- “ *Bertram.* Stay, gentle lady, I would somewhat with thee.
Thou shalt not go. (*Detaining her.*)
“ *Imogene.* Shalt not ! I stand in fear !
Release me ! I must break from him.”
THE REV. C. MATURIN’S “BERTRAM.”

To follow, now, the steps of Mr. Lawton and our hero, who, a short time before the nefarious circumstance just related had taken place, were hastening to the scene of the fire. They were speedily followed by the whole “*posse comitatus*” of domestics; and Mr. Lawton had the mortification of finding on his arrival at the spot that a valuable corn-stack had been set on fire, either by design or accident.

The utmost exertions were now put forth to prevent the flame spreading from the stack to property yet more valuable, and consisting of a range of barns and other farm buildings. At the

same time, Mr. Lawton had begged of his guest to return to Laura; which recommendation he was nothing loath to obey, especially as he could be of no service in remedying the evil before him, and also considering that she would be anxious to know more particularly what had taken place.

Renmore had not long left his host before this worthy person also repaired back to the house, having given all directions which the emergency of the moment required. What was his alarm, then, to learn that neither his daughter nor his guest were to be found; but a note left on the drawing-room table from the latter purported that he had just returned from the spot of the fire in time to discover a yet worse disaster,—namely, that of the unaccountable abduction of his daughter; to baffle which, his guest had set spurs to his horse in order to overtake the culprit who had ventured on so audacious an enterprise, and restore the lady to the arms of her parent.

“A generous, noble fellow!” exclaimed the father. “Heaven grant he may be fortunate in succeeding: he shall be rewarded with my eternal gratitude—with all I possess—my child herself! Yes; her hand will I place in his own; for I cannot doubt, by all I can judge, that he loves her. Heaven grant he may be successful in restoring her—my only beloved child!”

Thus agitated, between his consternation at what had taken place, and his reliance on Renmore's exertions for the restoration of his daughter, the unhappy father passed an anxious night, pacing up and down the room, the thought of his loss from the fire having been overwhelmed in the keener suffering occasioned by that of his daughter.

But, joy to his heart ! the next morning brought back Renmore with his lovely prize ; and from the account he gave, it appeared that the hue and cry having been soon raised by some people who were up late at a village inn in the Cockermouth road, where Laura was being hurried along, they set out after the culprit who was riding away with her as described. He was accordingly (as it must be supposed) fain to rein in his steed at a turning in the road, and place her, senseless as she was, on the high shelving bank by its side. Here the persons in pursuit found her, and speedily conveyed her back to the inn, where she was recognised by the master of the place as no less a person than the heiress of Blacktarn. Here every assistance that could be rendered her was administered ; and shortly after, a thundering of horse's hoofs was heard advancing to the inn gates, and Renmore himself rode up to them, demanding with painful eagerness if they had seen any one ride past, bearing with him a young lady. The words were no sooner out of his

mouth than the required explanation was given ; and the fair object of his search having now recovered from the terror she had experienced, it was agreed that the next morning she should be conducted back by Renmore to Blacktarn.

Such was his account of the circumstances ; and it may be imagined, if he had been a welcome guest heretofore, he was now doubly cherished by the claims that a father's acknowledgment and that of the lady herself, could testify, for the succour he had shewn himself so ready to lend, though, indeed, she had fortunately been rescued from her precarious condition before he had arrived.

Frequent were the references made in the course of conversation by Mr. Lawton to Renmore, on the score of his attentions, but as often was the subject turned aside by him, with his usual politeness, but with what appeared rather a coldness of civility than otherwise to the warmhearted Lawton, who wished to see a reciprocation of that increased friendship he now testified towards his guest.

He remarked this to his daughter, who, if she was silent on the subject, yet perhaps thought the more upon it. Nor were her thoughts altogether unmingled with pain, as may well be imagined, if she tacitly recognised that attachment towards our hero, to the growth of which we have borne witness, and which on his part was unan-

swered and unreturned, except only by his uniform politeness of attention. "Politeness!" it is but a chill answer to the challenge of love.

The paleness of her cheek silently witnessed that her heart was in some measure aggrieved; nor could her sentiments towards our hero escape him; and feeling that it was impossible for him to reciprocate them, not only from various circumstances in which he was situated, but also because his heart was already so deeply engaged, he came to the determination of taking leave of Blacktarn without any further delay. In fact, notwithstanding the interest that Laura Lawton was well calculated to inspire, from her attractions both personal and mental, Renmore's heart never swerved from the thought of Gertrude, whom he felt was rendered even dearer to him by absence.

The report which Golefield and his companions had mentioned concerning the marriage between herself and Quandish, he had indeed mocked, as utterly idle and ridiculous; yet his apprehensions were excited, lest Gertrude should have been suffering more vexation from her parent's importunity on behalf of the preacher; and hence, a report might have arisen that the union in question would take place, because it was so zealously sanctioned by dame Wetherby herself.

"Why," thought Renmore, "if my surmises are

right, does she not let me hear from her ?” And then, with the impatience of a true lover, he determined on writing first of all to her.

Should the reader be desirous of witnessing the purport of his letter, we will gratify his curiosity by returning now with that view to the fair object herself to whom it was addressed, and whom it is now time we should rejoin. Meantime, our hero, according to his purpose as already stated, took leave of his host and fair hostess, expressing in his usual style of cheerful politeness the pleasure he looked forward to at meeting them at the “boat-race,” or “regatta,” on Lake Derwentwater, of which they now again reminded him at parting.

It was not long before his form, as he rode through the chase, was lost to Laura’s eyes as they followed his way. Tears had dimmed them as she had stood looking after his track at the window ; and she turned away to give her surcharged heart relief in those that now more freely flowed.

“The 20th will not be long before it comes,” she said to herself ; “I shall see him again soon at the regatta ;” and with these thoughts the heart of the gentle Laura consoled itself as best it might.

Our hero having passed the boundary of the chase, found himself on the high road. Having ridden onward a short way, he at length came to the spot where it branched off in two direc-

tions—one being that which led to Buttermere, and the other to Cockermouth. He reined in his horse as if irresolute, for the moment, which of the two he should pursue; at length, though his heart wandered in the first of them, and his step, too, will eventually be seen following it, yet, at present, he turned the bridle in the opposite direction, and was speedily making the best of his way to Cockermouth.

Leaving him, then, to pursue his route, our duty leads us to the village-home of Gertrude. We are happy to find that after the departure of her late inmate “the Colonel,” as he was termed at the hostelry, Mrs. Wetherby had, in consequence of some politic advice from Quandish, exercised less harshness of constraint, rather than an increase of it (as Renmore had feared) towards her lovely daughter. It was considered by the crafty saint as well to desist for a few days from the inauspicious prosecution of his suit; and Gertrude, accordingly, enjoyed a period of comparative peace, and walked forth once again more cheerfully on her rural avocations.

Her thoughts were further cheered by the consideration, that though she might again be unpleasantly beset by the addresses she had already turned from with so much disgust, yet that this period of embarrassment was now soon to cease.

The smile of Fenton would meet her in her dreams, and yet more that of Renmore, and fortify her as she started from the loathsome phantom where the effigies of the pseudo-preacher haunted her. The happy period to which she looked was as yet, no doubt, uncertain ; but still the pleasurable dream that hovered round her heart, promising that all her fears and uncertainties would soon be at an end, hung over it all, beautifully as vaguely. It seemed as the morning mist that veils the lovely brow of Nature, from which it is soon to steal away, before the increased warmth and joy-light of day, and discover all her loveliness and radiance.

Renmore had been hurried away so suddenly that he had not time (as we have witnessed) to fix the precise period of his coming to celebrate their union. He could only say, that on her suffering any further molestation from the person she dreaded, she was at once to remove to the good curate. However, she doubted not that he would, on his part, write (if he did not hear first from her), and endeavour to let her know as precisely as he could the period of his again meeting her ; and this intimation would guide her movements as to proceeding to Lorton.

That she was not mistaken in her conjecture we have seen, though the letter which she looked for had not yet arrived at her hand. It is true, he

had suggested to her that she should, under certain circumstances, repair to Fenton; but he had recommended her not to resolve on that measure unless pressed to extremities, since such a step would only occasion pursuit after her. Accordingly, she remained at Buttermere, her heart beating quicker and quicker as every succeeding day bespoke that her hopes might now be the more speedily met in hearing from Renmore.

In what lights and shadows do we walk in this life!—they vary as rapidly as those shifting shadows over the verdant path yonder of the lovely herd-mistress, while the sun now put forth, now withdrew his rays, as the vague clouds streamed ever and anon to intercept them, where they shone over her mountain way. It appears that on the present day she had led her herd in the direction of Mr. Howbiggen's: and on her return, as she descended from the verge of the downs to the green and shadowy lane that led back towards Buttermere, along the lake, she was greeted by a most formidable "belle," dressed like another Iris, in "many colours." In fact, if we recall to mind the portrait of Miss Howbiggen's costume some little time ago at church, we shall not be at a loss to pronounce who the person was that now "condescendingly" greeted the Beauty.

Certainly, we cannot help pausing for a moment,

to mark the contrast afforded by the grotesquerie of the one, and the simple native charm of the other.

“ Well, my dear ! so you are taking back your herd. I’m glad to have fallen in with you, if it were but to tell you how happy I am to hear of your being about to establish yourself so respectably. A little difference in years, no doubt ; but that is no great consequence. You have shewn your good sense in choosing a partner for life who will be a guide to your youth and inexperience, rather than any silly swain amongst the young farmers of the neighbourhood. I wish you joy, child, with all my heart.”

This amiable speech requires no comment. It shews plainly that our hero’s surmise was well-founded—that Miss Howbiggen had considered Mrs. Wetherby’s encouragement of Quandish’s addresses as a sufficient assurance that it was a “ thing settled ” that he should wed Gertrude.

“ Why, what can all this mean ? ” thought the Beauty, fixing her lovely eyes in a mingled expression of surprise and displeasure, at what she considered (as well she might) the unbecoming as well as unintelligible liberty taken by the grotesque spinster before her.

“ I really am not aware, ma’am,” she replied, “ what exactly you mean ; there is some mistake.”

“ Oh no ! I am well aware of the whole cir-

cumstance. However, very becoming modesty in yourself! Yes, yes, child; I shall not forget to come and see you in your new home. Good bye, my dear! good bye!"

So saying, Miss Howbiggen passed onward within the grounds of her brother's residence, near which she had met Gertrude, and was speedily beyond the reach of any inquiry as to what her "kind" expressions could signify. Gertrude, as may well be supposed, was lost in astonishment at the singular greeting she had just experienced; but considering who the person was from whom she had received it, she soon regained her composure, being aware of Miss Howbiggen's "amiable failing" of now and then spreading reports, which made the "good folk" of the neighbourhood "wonder," and were not too implicitly to be relied on.

As she proceeded for some little distance, with her herd, along the lovely banks of the lake, her attention was presently caught by another figure, of which, although she thought she recollected the face, yet so singularly disguised was he, and "transmogrified" (as the being himself would have called it) by the dress he had on, that she did not at first recognise him. She still looked at him, since he appeared to be advancing in order to accost herself, to judge by the broad grin that elongated his mouth, and the gestures he used;

and her doubts as to his identity were at length removed by his addressing her.

“Holloa, young missis!” for so did the clowns of Buttermere usually express their respect for the daughter of the landlady of the Traveller’s Rest. “Holloa, I say! you wor just the person I wor a looking for.”

“Indeed, Jock!” replied Gertrude, smiling, for it was “Colonel Renmore’s groom” himself that addressed her; “is it you? I really did not know you again in that dress. Why this is not May-day!” she continued, smiling, and with her usual archness. “How come you in that gay livery?”

“Whoy, now, didn’t you know that the Colonel took me into his sarvice as he went to Blacktarn, and rigged me out in his own livery? ‘May-day’ or not, it was the ‘best day’ in my life I’ve known for some time. Oh! I’ll tell you all about it by-and-bye, if so be you please to hear it. Meantime, my business is to convey this to you—‘to forward it’ (as you will larn) by the writing a top.”

“Forward it?” said Gertrude, as Jock handed the letter in question to her, while she at once perceived that its address was a fictitious one, in order not to excite any suspicion of his correspondence with her. So, after placing it in her bosom, and informing Jock the direction should be attended to, she asked him “how he liked his new

place? and how long the Colonel was about to remain at Blacktarn?"

"Why, as for my new place, I loiked it so well (for the Colonel's 'quoite the gem'man') that I should not ha' been sorry if my acquaintance with it had grown older. But its loike all other matters where a poor man fancies he's got a change for the better—too good to last. For his honour is not going to stay in the neighbrud, and foinds I shall be more in his way than of sarvice; so he told me I wor 'at liberty' (ay, that wor the word) to go where I loiked. 'Now,' says I, 'Sir, I had rather be at liberty to stay wi' a good master when I have found one.' Yees; so I told un; but a smoiled, and said no more, but only wished me well, and paid me my wages, telling me to deliver that letter into your hand."

"No doubt, as you liked your new master on so short an acquaintance, Jock, you would not have been sorry, indeed, to improve it. You would have liked him more, I dare say, on a further acquaintance."

"Ay, that I should, I can answer! Bless you, for only a week and a little more, see what he ha' given me—my wages, and a present besoides!"

So saying, Jock hoisted up his shoulder and began to dive into his pocket to produce its contents, when he was stopped by Gertrude.

“Never mind, Jock, I can readily believe the Colonel’s liberality; but let me know—so he is about to leave Blacktarn?”

“Ay; but it can only be for a while, I reckon. For they say as how as he and Miss Lawton loike one another so well that he’s loikely to come back soon, and then they’ll take each other for better or . . . whoy, how now?” continued Jock, staring with a sudden surprise at the change that his words produced in Gertrude’s countenance, “whoy! how you are all come over so pale, somehow.”

“Oh, no, you mistake—not at all—I’m only a little tired. So the Colonel is going to be married, you say?” she continued, endeavouring to resume her air of gaiety. “Well, Miss Lawton is spoken of as a very amiable and——”

“Why, dang it, if you don’t come over pale and red by turns.”

“You mistake, you mistake, Jock!—but it is growing late. The sun has gone down,—so good evening. The letter shall be delivered.”

So saying, Gertrude turned with her kine in a different direction, leaving Jock puzzling with himself how it could happen that she came over “so queer-like” (as he expressed it) all on a sudden. But this topic of the good clown’s surprise was but transitory, being banished from his mind by the yet more perplexing one, now he was

out of a place and work,—namely, where he should turn for house and home and wages next?

Leaving him to his cogitations,—which were divided between the inclination to stay at his native place, and resume his duties of carrier, or, on the other hand, go “by the wagon up to Lunnon, and get again into sarvice,”—we will return to Gertrude.

The moment she was alone, she took the letter from her bosom, and read as follows:—

“MY DEAR LOVE,

“I DISPATCH this by the hands of a trustworthy clown, to tell you that I shall certainly be at Buttermere by the 19th instant, the evening before the boat-race on Derwentwater. I presume you are not at Lorton, or you would have let me know whether you had been obliged to take this step or not. As you have not, I am happy in being able to conclude that you have been permitted to enjoy some respite from the annoyances you were beset with at the period of my departure. My heart is ever with you. Think of me, sweetest, and believe my greatest happiness is in looking forward soon to meet you again. I shall find you in the old haunt, on the north side of the hill.

“P.S. By-the-bye, if a foolish and impertinent report that has, I understand, emanated originally from the officiousness of an elderly lady at Butter-

mere (otherwise a very estimable person) should have come to your ears, you will know how to treat it as it deserves. This good person must needs 'marry me up' to Mr. Lawton's daughter here. I was really almost too angry to smile at the meddlesome absurdity of this piece of village gossip; it annoyed me much on its first coming to my ears, and is about as veracious as a report of a similar character concerning yourself and that saint, Quandish; of course emanating from the same quarter.

"Farewell, love; again and again ever yours."

If Gertrude had been sensible of a momentary uneasiness at the report conveyed her by Jock, this postscript swept it away entirely; indeed, on a little reflection she would have scarcely required the assurance of the letter to induce her, at once, to repudiate the story, and quiet her alarm. The rose which had transitorily waned in her cheek again blushed there; her eye again sparkled with its wonted cheerfulness; her step was again buoyant along her verdant path. She pressed the letter to her lips again and again—she looked again and again at the date of the writer's return—to be certain that it was thus soon she should see him by her side. Every moment appeared too long that divided her from the wished-for period

of her expectations, and as every day passed by, her heart was lighter and lighter in the thought that this interval of anxious delay was nearer its termination.

The looked-for day at length arrived which the letter had specified would be that of Renmore's arrival in Buttermere. Gertrude was at the accustomed haunt where often had Renmore loitered happy hours in conversing with her, as Chance, or some other power, be it Fate or Love, or both, had invariably led their footsteps into each other's track. How lingeringly the hours passed away,—and still he was not yet come!

“The sun has not sunk,” she said; “he will yet be here. Before the shadows of night wrap mountain, and valley, and slumbering meer, I shall see him! When was it that I have ever looked for him and he has not come? No, no; he will soon be here. He will soon take me from this state of painful uncertainty—that I may not again be subjected to the——”

But here her attention was suddenly arrested, and a faint scream escaped her, elicited as it was rather by fear than any pleasing surprise, at the sight of a man's shadow, thrown in uncouth outline and proportions from behind her, upon the opposite side of the cliff. Between this and the crag on whose brink she stood, a deep and dark chasm

yawned at her feet. As she started and looked round behind her, to see whence the shadow was thrown, she saw, not Renmore, but (bitter disappointment!) a person coming down the verge of the steep towards her, whose presence struck dismay and loathing to her heart, and under which she found it difficult at first to rally. If ever she had regarded him with mingled mistrust and dread,—if ever she turned from his brow in disgust of those characters of malignity and cunning imprinted on it,—she had reason to do so now. She hastened her step, as she shrieked and endeavoured to pass on from the threatened meeting with him; but, with rapid strides, and a smile of increased malice on his lip, he gained her side on the rocky parapet. It was Quandish.

“Ha, ha!” he exclaimed with a fiendish laugh, little in accordance with his general puritanical character; “do you fly me, maiden? Am I so loathsome to you that you avoid me as a pestilence? Have I not shewn patience long enough in desisting these many days past from addressing you?”

Gertrude hurried onward and answered nothing to him at first, intent alone on making her escape; but as there was yet no deflexion from the ledge to facilitate her enfranchisement, and as he still perseveringly kept pace with her, repeating his re-

monstrance at her avoidance of him, she was obliged at length to reply. And as he continued, calling out, "I beseech you stay your step, maiden,—slacken your pace! I would say something to you," she replied abruptly, and willing, if possible, to put a termination to the penance of his importunities—

"Anything that you can say will have little effect in obtaining any other answer than that which you have already forced from me. You have already, through my mother no less than of yourself, wearied me enough. Leave me, I request you. Surely your own sense of pride and self-respect would suggest to you," she added, looking at him with mingled scorn and terror, "to desist in addresses that are so ill repaid; and which, let me add, excite so much repugnance in the person to whom they are offered. Leave me to myself."

Quandish was ready to gnash his teeth in the anguish and fury of his heart. Even if Gertrude's beauty could ever have awakened any such sentiment as love in his heart, (divided, indeed, as it would be with more interested feelings,) it would now have been turned to bitterest hate. It demanded his utmost efforts to repress the expression of his naturally violent feelings, and make some attempt to exhibit forbearance, or even tenderness,

as with gasping breath, and a countenance pale with rage, he hastily replied—

“You may imagine what my ‘love,’” (so spoke he at least, whatever he felt,)—“ay, my love for you must be, if it could silence in my heart the whisperings of that offended pride to which you appeal.”

“Pray do not talk to me of love. If I could believe you even capable of any such sentiment, it would be entertained quite in vain as regarded myself,” she replied hurriedly, attempting now to take advantage of a turning which presented itself along the hill-brow; but he as speedily stepped before her and prevented her progress, while his countenance, as he looked at her, wore the same malignant smile as on his first approach.

“Let me pass on my way!” she exclaimed, her anger and vexation being now excited at his interruption—“Let me pass! What right have you to obstruct me in this way?—to haunt me in this offensive, this unseemly, unmanly manner?”

“Because you will not hear what I have to communicate. You condemn before you listen; you disregard what I have to say as concerns your peace, your honour, your future——”

“I ask you again, why do you continue to hunt me out thus for the sport of your persecution? Is it not enough that you have made my home painful

to me?—that I approach it with dread and apprehension lest I should be subjected to addresses that are nauseating to me?—that I am glad to shun it, and find a refuge in the solitude of these barren walks, whose worst storms are peace to me, rather than the infliction my home has subjected me to, too often of late, through your ungenerous as useless importunity? I can hear no more! Let me pass!” she continued, raising her tone, and darting a look of mingled reproach and contempt at him; for the sensation of fear with which the villany of his countenance generally inspired her had now given way to more excited and turbulent feelings.

As she spoke, the storm that had been awakened in the bosom of Quandish had gained strength, and now broke out in the unrestrained vehemence of all his natural ferocity. The fiend had now thrown aside his saintly cloak, and stood forth in all the undisguised blackness which characterized him, and which, though she had read it heretofore in the sinister aspect of his countenance, yet might well astound her in the savage exemplification of it now afforded her.

“Look you,” he cried, “you have opposed me sufficiently to try the mildest spirit, and exasperate the meekest. I had sought you out, not to conciliate any longer your loathing or soften your repugnance—not even to tell you that scorn now

meets scorn—but to place you on your guard as to one——”

“Let me pass!” again half exclaimed, half shrieked poor Gertrude, whose terrors were now reasonably again awakened by the menace of the ruffian’s manner, no less than by his voice and countenance. She made another effort to force her way past him, when he rudely seized her by the arm and held her back, as he exclaimed—

“Gracious heaven! do not provoke me too far! There is none near to witness what these solitudes may see. Your life is in my hands. These crags—that dark gulf below us—can never carry tales of what they may yet be the scene of.”

“Let me go past——”

“Listen to me, I say. I warn you,” he added, speaking through his fixed teeth, and clenching the fingers of one hand as he tightened his grasp of her arm with the other,—“I warn you against the person that——”

“Will you murder me!” she exclaimed, interrupting him. “Take your hand from me; why do you clench me thus?” and she again struggled with her utmost effort to gain the upper ground; while the ruffian, with a fiendish laugh, and a tone now lowered in the settled infamy of his resolve, muttered forth—

“Then take what you have brought on yourself! You will force me to this. Not a thou-

sand deaths could gratify the hatred you have awakened——”

And here he had grappled with his intended victim, and another moment would have witnessed her hurled to death in the chasm below, when, in the agony of her effort to gain the higher ground away from the brink, she baffled the movement that would have been fatal to her, by seizing with the one hand which was at liberty, a projecting bough of mountain-ash that sprouted from the crag ; while, at the same time, the earth on which the ruffian stood began to give way under his feet, and, threatening to fall, diverted his attention to his own preservation, from the destruction of her whom he had nearly made his victim.

At liberty now, she stood on the upper ground, and waited not in so dangerous a spot to reproach him with his guilt ; but, urged by her terror, fled up the hill-brow, and did not pause till she had gained a wide and open piece of table-land at some distance off, where some of her herd were quietly grazing. Had they been yet straying over the hills, she had now no longer her horn to call them back ; this had fallen from her hand in the late struggle she had encountered ; and wildly did she look round as she hastened onward calling to her herd, to see if Renmore’s appearance might possibly now be descried for her succour ; but she looked in vain.

CHAPTER X.

“ Let him not dare to challenge me of wrong.

. . . “ If thou dost shrink to have thy guilt unmask’d,
Thou shouldest first have shrunk to act thus foully !

My stricter hand was made to seize on vice.”

BEN JONSON.

ALL anxiety, as we are, to pursue Gertrude’s track, in case anything further befel her, it is yet incumbent on us to inquire what were the motives of Quandish in seeking her out on the crag, as we have witnessed, if indeed his presence there was the result of design? To satisfy our curiosity, then, on this point, we shall now proceed with all promptness, in order to lose no time in rejoining our heroine.

It had been, then, with little less eagerness that Quandish had looked forward to the day of Renmore’s return than Gertrude; for our hero had dispatched a line also to him, to advertise him of his coming back to pay the “hush-money.” But very different were the shades

which this eagerness wore in the bosoms of one and the other. It was darkened by hate in that of Quandish, as foully on the one hand, as it was on the other illumined by the rose-hues of love in the breast of Gertrude. "To-day was the day," thought Quandish, "by which he ought to return to redeem his forfeit life. Let him be true to his pledge, or it shall be sacrificed;—let him be true to his pledge."

And here he paused suddenly, as if some new consideration had suggested itself, and the expression of which will afford us a yet deeper insight into the blackness of his character. "But what right," he said, "have *I* to keep conditions with him on my part? Has not a *new* subject arisen for which I may plausibly enough take exception? Has he not stood in the way of me and the object that was nearest my heart—namely, securing the hand of this girl—in spite of all his artful excuses)—which must have been mine, had this fellow been out of the way—so urgent as her foolish mother was in my behalf. Away, then, with any conditions!—he has wronged me. I will yet, I trust," and he laughed scornfully, "be as deep a trickster as himself. I will first take the price of his blood, and then will I glut my revenge on him. I will scoff at him, and tell him if he thinks he has redeemed his life, he is deceived! Ay, I will betray him nevertheless; and let him appeal to

honour and truth in vain!—ha, ha!—*Honour* indeed! a worthy argument coming from him who has cajoled so many! Honour!—away with the mockery! I shall be a fool not to make him, if I can, my dupe, as he fancies he is now making me! I could find in my heart to rid his hated life by this hand, even without putting justice to the trouble of being his executioner! He has come across my path in my pursuit of this girl!—he has!”

But here the pseudo-preacher (and “assassin” at heart) was called again to at least an exterior of sanctimony by the approach of sundry “meetings” of the dissenting flock, who were now gathering together towards the chapel, near which he awaited their coming to hear him hold forth. With feelings, then, thus masked by charity and truth—with feelings such as those we have heard him express, where hatred was exasperated by the additional rancour of jealousy—he ascended the preacher’s desk!

It was difficult for him (as may be imagined) to smoothe his malign brow into that of his ordinary sanctimonious meekness; or even to shape its feature to that of holy zeal. For however much warmth of expression this might demand, it was impossible to throw a guise of pious fervour over the turbid and rancorous spirit-battlings that agitated the heart, and forced the countenance to bear testimony of the savage war within.

The text he chose for his discourse was that of the betrayal of Samson by Dalilah ; in which his sympathy in the cause of betrayal warmed him almost to an imprudent excess of earnestness. Of this he at length became aware, being recalled to himself by the pious gaping of the congregation, and he endeavoured to soften it down to a milder strain ; but place what constraint he would on himself, the rancour within still burst forth again ; and in a hurried tone and manner, he was at length not sorry to bring the mockery of this disordered discourse to a conclusion, and dismiss the meetings whither they would, so that he were then left to himself and his meditations.

With a step as hurried as his oratory had been, he advanced, now, with rapid strides towards the Traveller's Rest. " It is possible he has arrived by this time," he said, " and is waiting, disguised, for me with the money at the village inn. Yes, I will repair thither ; it will be a good spot to denounce him—to lay hands on him—to shake the purse in his face—and then mock him, by telling him he has paid it in vain !"

Onward then he strode, rife in the base expectation we have just heard him express ; and in his haste he speedily overtook his pious ally, dame Wetherby, who had been an auditor of the late discourse.

‘ Ah, Mrs. Wetherby, I am well pleased to see

you !” he said, slackening his pace and resuming his conventicle strain as well as he could. “ I was on my way to your goodly threshold. Verily, it rejoices me to approach the abode of peace, and where the righteous pitch their tent. Oh, grant,” he added, muttering to himself, as the scowl clouded his brow, “ I may but meet *him* there !”

“ Welcome shall you be, Mr. Quandish,” replied the dame—“ right welcome. And in truth you do well to seek some abode of peace, for it seemed to me your spirit, during the ‘ discourse,’ was somewhat vexed.”

“ Right vexed was it, indeed, (and he spoke with truth,) my good dame—right vexed. But what spirit can behold the sinfulness of the children of Mammon and unrighteousness, nor wax wroth thereat ? But with due zeal on the part of the shepherd, we may yet call the straggling flock back to the fold ! And here, while I speak of the sheep, let me not forget the lamb ! yea, the lamb of gentleness !”

“ I trow you would speak of my wayward child under that name. Alas ! I fear it will be difficult to lead this ‘ lamb’ unto the fold that would be for her weal ! But step in, good Mr. Quandish—step in. We can discourse more fully of all matters it imports us to speak of, when seated and at rest, for here are we at the threshold.”

And with these words, dame Wetherby entered the porch of the hostelrie, followed by Quandish, who with eager eyes and lips apart, bespeaking the breathless expectation in which he panted for the prize of Renmore's capture, peered on every side as he entered. He cast a hasty glance round the room where the villagers used to sit and smoke, and saw a person, whose appearance acted in some degree as damping for the time the keenness of feeling with which he pried. Mrs. Wetherby, meantime, had gone to her "sanctum" on the opposite side of the passage, awaiting the company of Quandish.

It has been already witnessed, in an earlier stage of our story, how little satisfaction the pseudo-preacher felt in coming in contact with one who, it should seem from Quandish's avoidance of him, was acquainted with our Judas's real character. Accordingly, he drew back his step suddenly from the door-way of the room, as anxious to slink from the notice of the object (it should seem) of his apprehension. But the keen eye of old Mike (for it was himself) had already glanced on him, and it now followed him, fixing itself on that of the preacher in scornful significance. There was no one present but themselves. It was precisely such a glance as might be directed by one man on another whom he was detecting in some act of vil-

lany. Quandish was spell-bound—painfully fascinated, as it were, (as a bird by the rattlesnake's eye,) by this penetrating search, that read his very soul,—and he felt as unable to retreat as he was unwilling to come forward. He stammered out—

“Oh !—ahem !—I beg pardon,—I was looking for some one else—I was——”

“Expecting, mayhap, to receive the price of blood !—ay, you may start,” said the old man, as a smile of scorn curled his lip ; “but there are things you would do less readily than that, unless I mistake my old acquaintance—Sim——”

“Hush, my good Mike,—hush, I beseech you.”

“What, you are startled, are you, to see you are not wholly unknown to me?”

“Startled ?” said Quandish, hesitating and pale, “no,—not at all,—or, if I was, did you not say enough to startle any man, when you suggest to him that he is coming on such a murderous errand as that you named ? *I*—ahem !—am no such person—ahem !—”

Here the self-convicted Judas shuffled away from the dangerous presence of the old mariner, hoping to escape any further colloquy which might lead to disclosures not precisely convenient at that moment, whether as regarded his views as to Renmore, or his consciousness of the old man's knowledge of his own former movements and character.

Accordingly, he went across the passage to dame Wetherby's "sanctum," who was awaiting him at her pious tea-table, and informing her that he was called away by a friend who required to speak with him, he promised to return by-and-by, —that is to say, when he should find the place rid of the dreaded mariner, to avoid whom he now slunk forth at the door, whose threshold led upon the bowling-green we have before trodden with our hero and Dr. Esdaile. It was but a moment for him to cross this lawn, and pass over the little rude plank-bridge that was thrown over the brook, to find himself on the entrance of the walk or lane already described as running at the base of the hills behind Buttermere, and shaded with lime, holly, yew, and other trees.

"Pestilence on that fellow !" he exclaimed angrily to himself, "I firmly believe he is in league with Hatfield to thwart me;" and he stamped on the ground in the impatience of his anger; when suddenly, on turning round he started in amazement and dismay at again meeting the weird, unearthly visage of the mariner, bent on his own, like an angry spectre's, and marked with that fearful expression of scorn and significance that had already so confounded him.

"Well, what want you with me? what have you dogged my steps hither for?" stammered out

Quandish, more alarmed and confused than even on his first meeting with Mike in the hostelry.

“To answer the question you seemed to doubt it was in my power to reply to,” said Mike, as the sneer played on his thin blue lip;—“to tell you that I do know you,—that I knew your charitable errand at Ravenglass, some little time past, and know it now,—that you wear no disguise for the eyes of old Mike.”

“Errand at Ravenglass!” hastily rejoined the mock-saint, “I—I—really do not understand you,—you mistake me. How can you know what brought me to Ravenglass?”

“Hah! is it so?—why, you convict yourself,” said the old man, with a tone of scornful triumph, which yet more disconcerted the ruffian, who had unwittingly committed himself. “What then! I have seen ere now the betrayer of a benefactor’s life, and yet more, have it in my power to unmask the ‘saint,’” continued the old man, with a searching and caustic significance of tone, that made the subject of its ordeal wince beneath the infliction.

“Benefactor’s blood!—I don’t understand you. I—I,”—confusedly exclaimed the disconcerted ruffian, while, rising now in his tone, he endeavoured to outface by bluster the keen taunts of his questioner. “And how,” he continued, “I should like to know,

could you know anything of my movements at Ravenglass, (supposing I had been there,) unless, and which I believe to be the fact, it was yourself that facilitated the escape of the felon, Hatfield, from that port?"

"Mayhap I did," coolly replied Mike, adding, with his former searching irony, "his escape from *you*. What did you expect for betraying him?" continued Mike, laughing in bitter scorn; "what price did you put (then, as you do now) on the man who has befriended you and yours!—Ha, ha! A large one, doubtless,—he ought to be *dear* to you!"

"I tell you, I will not stand listening to these misplaced taunts, and——"

"*Misplaced!*—ha, ha! 'sorely placed,' were more truly spoken."

"What right have you to infest me with either your presence or your question? *Hem—hem—I—I—*always understood it was a praiseworthy task—*hem—*to consign a felon to the hands of justice :—" and the confounded "saint" brushed forward as if to escape his inquisitor, while Mike, taking up his words, speedily forced him to turn round, as he said—

"Ay; and the more 'praiseworthy,' no doubt, on the part of a—brother felon. Oh! it is 'praise-

worthy' to impeach a guilt which ought to out-balance (who can gainsay it?) the remembrance of any little good done us. Very praiseworthy is it to betray a criminal,—no matter if we once shared his crime—and from whom we would never think of extorting a bribe to be silent. Hah! what! you start—you find at last that I do know you!"—and a contemptuous laugh accompanied the words, while Quandish, darting an angry look at Mike, hastily exclaimed—

"I will stay no longer to hear these malicious insinuations,—I—I—could repel them if I pleased—I—"

"Take heed, take heed, Master Quandish!" said Mike, pursuing his tone of significant mockery, "or I may chance to strip the pious cloak you bear from off your shoulders, and exhibit you in your undisguised deformity to the eyes of those you, for reasons best known to yourself, would wish to keep blind to your real *merits*—ha, ha!"—

"I defy—I—"

"It was this hint I wished to convey to you—and that unless you desist from the course of a treachery yet more sinful than any guilt it would deliver up to justice, I will rip off this pious mask and——"

"I say, I defy all your 'hints' and your——"

“Peace, man! and hear me yet a word further,” said Mike, now changing his former bitter irony for a tone of fearful resolve, his lip quivering with emotion, and the hue of his countenance becoming yet more ghastly with the intenseness of feeling with which he spoke. “Praiseworthy as you may call your treacherous task—yet, mark me, I am wizard enough (since men will have me so) to foresee that the further you stand aloof from the path of your desired victim, the safer too will it be for yourself. He has thwarted you already, and will possibly thwart you again—may be, he is thwarting you now:—” and the significance of these words at once bespoke to the pretended preacher that the speaker was acquainted with the ill-success of his suit towards Gertrude; and his anger was about to urge him to reply, but Mike overawed him. “Mark!” he continued; “should your rancorous, your blood-thirsty perseverance yet gain its end in bringing your victim to his last fearful reckoning—mark, I say, your own doom is not far off!”

“Away with your idle menace and assumed mysticism!” rejoined Quandish, no less incensed than he was confounded. “I cannot deem you other than as the accomplice of a felon—you have borne witness yourself to as much in the affair of Ravenglass. I defy your empiricism—your

mock warnings. My character stands beyond the reach——”

But his words (marked by angry blusters as they were) were once again cut short by the scornful laugh of Mike, who having “said his say,” and not being desirous to bandy further words with a being he regarded as the most loathsome of mankind, turned from him by a path that wound suddenly up the crag, and left him repeating his idle defiance to himself, as he said—

“I see well what all this pretension to superior foresight—this mysticism with which you delude the vulgar, means. It is but a cloak for the better securing your safety in movements which I would swear before any court of justice,” (he added, like a true spy and treacherous king’s evidence,) “are directed towards the screening a felon. You are in Hatfield’s confidence, and consequently his accomplice. Have you not assisted his escape in the Ravenglass affair once before?—ay, and are endeavouring to shield him from apprehension and assist his escape again? I’m sure of it! But I will see if I cannot frustrate this ‘conspiracy’ yet. You menaced me, did you?—threatened, perhaps, my life? Be it so; we will see which shall be beforehand with the other. You scoff at me, do you? Wait a little while, and it may possibly be my turn to scoff!”

So saying, and considering now that the coast was clear of the old mariner, Quandish was about to retrace his steps towards the Traveller's Rest, on the double commission of rejoining dame Wetherby's tea-table, and laying wait for Renmore, as already explained. His movements, however, were suddenly arrested by the far sounds of a horn, which wound in reverberations weaker and weaker, till they died away over the spot where he stood.

Breathless he paused, listening to those echoes. As he stood mute, and straining to catch the sound, he could hear the beatings of his heart louder than any other sound,—so deep was his agitation—such a tumult was roused within him. Those sounds he could not mistake. His ear was rendered keen by the incitements of mortified self-love, of hatred, of baffled hope, and frustrated interest. Those sounds were awakened from the far crags above by the pastoral horn of Gertrude. He stood yet a brief space longer, as if considering within himself, and uncertain as to which direction he should proceed in—whether back to the Traveller's Rest, or to the spot whence those sounds arose.

“It is resolved!” he at length exclaimed, his countenance convulsed by the workings of jealous hatred and savage purpose. “I will seek her out—I will seek her out in her solitary way. An opportunity is afforded me now of forcing my words on her ear,

however reluctant to listen to me. I can dog her steps through the wild, while I pour the bitter truth into her soul, of the true condition and character of this favoured suitor. A hunted, hopeless felon ! Ha, ha ! A suitor to be proud of, truly ! It is not love so much of which I will speak to her now ; or if I speak of love, it will be but in mockery. No ; it is now the turn of Hate to speak ! Has she not provoked my hate ?—ay, a hate whose bitterness is so great that it becomes even a pleasure ! What ! has she not avoided me as a contagion ?—as a pestilence ?—shrunk from my path ?”

And here his countenance seemed darkened by a yet blacker shade of malignity,—“verily,” to use his own strain of the conventicle, “as of a murderer determining on his fell purpose.” Suddenly he resumed.

“But she shall not escape me now ! She shall hear the whole of those high attributes possessed by him for whom she spurns and shuns me ; for it seems the letter I caused to be placed in her way cannot have reached her.” (It did reach her hand, as the reader will remember, and failed of its effect through the dexterity of evasion and address of the person against whom it was directed.) “Yes ; she shall learn *all* his ‘accomplishments !’” and he laughed a savage laugh of irony as he spoke. “Nay, is it not generous in me to be thus candid ?” he continued, in the same bitter vein. “She

shall not give herself away in the dark. And as for *him*—what! he is to ‘thwart’ me! Say you so, old augur of ill?” he exclaimed, as the words of Mike now arose in the train of these his bitter musings, and served yet more to goad the rancour of their vindictiveness, adding fuel to the flame that already burned too fiercely in his breast. “He is to thwart me in revenge, in love—in all! To the proof! Oh! if I have no reason to triumph in my suit with this peevish and contemptuous girl, *he* shall have as little too. In revenge, in love, in all, will *I* thwart *him*. Not the price of a mine shall save his life!—shall purchase my forbearance!—no sums that *I* can take!” and he stamped his foot in the determination of his passion. “What will you say, wretched damsel,” he continued, with a scornful laugh, “when you find in this fair ‘gentleman’ for whom you have despised me, a felon, dragged to a shameful death? Ha, ha! Your cries will be music to my ear, that shall listen for more; nor shall be satisfied till those cries have faded over the struggle of his dying agonies! Methinks I see you pale, fainting, in the arms of the surrounding throng that have crowded to witness his shameful end on the scaffold. Ha, ha! Who will be mocked—who will be thwarted *then*?”

And as he uttered these words, with the fiendish laugh of mingled scorn and exultation at these

fearful anticipations, he hurried along the hill-brow, to search out the lovely object of his rancour, guided in his track by those notes he had caught of her horn. With what result he had arrived at the spot where he first of all came up with her, we have already seen ; but whether he had yet relinquished her track or not altogether, remains yet to be explained.

CHAPTER XI.

“ She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that, when selfishness mocks love’s delights.”

SHELLEY.

GERTRUDE did not cease running on her arrival at the piece of open pasturage, at the foot of the hills, which she had now gained ; and was followed by her herd, in no less disorder than their mistress. The kine followed her, amid their lowings, to a narrow and somewhat steep lane, which led immediately down to the high road. It was not until she arrived at the entrance to this descent or lane,—for its unevenness rendered it rather a bed of ruts than any other description of passage,—that she summoned courage to look round, in order to see if the object of her dread was resuming his pursuit of her. Happily, the glade she had passed was vacant ; and, without more delay, she hurried along the descent, trusting that she should be enabled to gain the public road before she could be overtaken.

Accordingly, she proceeded, calling to her herd, that well understood her challenge, to follow her steps along the descent ; an object which she was fortunate in accomplishing, in spite of some very luxuriant thyme, and tender hazel-sprays, that clothed the track on either side, and afforded sufficient temptation for the heifers to loiter and regale themselves on their progress. Often was she obliged to turn round and chide them onward ; and she had now succeeded in bringing her whole herd to the outlet leading into the high road, when one truant heifer, unable to forego the treat afforded it, lagged behind, and resisted the repeated summons of her mistress to follow with the rest.

This hindrance to her progress occasioned a delay which, though slight, she could well have spared in her present trepidation ; and it was not until after she had retraced her steps for a short distance, and driven the animal onward, that she could continue on her way homeward. What was her dismay, then, on seeing, on her return towards the entrance into the high road, the object of her dread and abhorrence, awaiting her approach ! She forgot, in an instant, her occupation, and fled up the bank with a scream, as she hoped to evade encountering her pursuer, and arrive at the road some distance further on, though by a steeper descent. As she fled, she heard the sound of Quandish's voice call-

ing after her, but it was too indistinctly caught to enable her to judge of the purport of his words.

“One moment,” (were the words in which he cried out;) “I ask but one moment to unfold to you the artifices of a proscribed felon; but one moment! Stay, I entreat you, and I will never assail you with a syllable more.”

Such were the words he exclaimed, as he followed with his best speed the steps of the lovely fugitive; but the breeze from the hill dissipated the accents long before they could fall articulately on her ear; and even if they had so fallen, her fear and the hurry of her flight would have prevented her from well distinguishing them. She rapidly gained ground on her pursuer, from her superior agility of frame and step; and had now arrived at the spot where the steepness of the bank sank into a slope gentle enough to afford her a descent at once into the road. She was in the act of springing down the bank, when a loosened and round pebble of large dimensions rolled along under her foot, and occasioned her to fall, as she slipped backwards and came to the bottom of the bank, with a violent concussion at the side of the head, which laid her senseless on the ground.

Quandish, on his arrival at the top of the bank, was alarmed as he looked over it and perceived the accident that had taken place; and was about

to make the best of his way from the spot, when, on turning round, he perceived a figure that half-discovered itself from behind the trunk of an old oak tree on the crag, and appeared to be observing him. He therefore paused and thought it would be safer, if he now busied himself in raising up the person of the fallen Gertrude, so that he might appear to any passer by, as though affording her assistance; it being, meantime, his intention to consign this care from his own, to the first hands that presented themselves. He had scarcely descended an instant from the bank, and commenced raising poor Gertrude's head, when the tramp of a horse's hoof, urged at full gallop, arrested his attention, and on raising his head in the direction of the Cockermouth road whence it proceeded, a rapid turning in the road placed horse and horseman at once before him.

Whether to fly, or stay where he was, and make the best explanation he could of the circumstances now presented to that rider's notice, was for a moment matter of conflict in his bosom; for in that horseman the person of no other than Renmore presented itself. He resolved upon the latter conclusion, and having, in his alarm and surprise, let Gertrude's head sink from his hands on the bank, he raised it up again confusedly, as our hero now reined in his steed hastily, and demanded without

at first recognising the faces of the two figures below him—"What was the matter?"

"An accident! a dreadful accident!" replied Quandish, without raising his head, and feigning not to know who the person was that questioned him,—when Renmore, having now alighted from his saddle, recognised Quandish at once, as he exclaimed—

"Good heavens! Simmonds,—Quandish, I would say,—is it you whom I see here? I have come, true to my time, to pay you the sum I had pledged myself to provide by this day. I was spurring on my horse to seek you out."

"Talk not of that subject at this moment. I did not doubt your faith; but here is a topic that will more worthily engross the attention of us both for the present," replied Quandish, in a tone of alarm and confusion, as much occasioned by fears for his own safety as by any concern for the fate of her to whom his remarks bore reference.

"Good God! what do I see?" cried Renmore, as he sprang forward to render himself certain that it was the face of Gertrude—his own Gertrude—which he saw, as Quandish now raised her up from the ground, and would have supported her, but that Renmore himself seized her passionately in his own arms, jealous that any succour should be afforded her from any one but himself. As he

hung over her in mingled alarm and surprise, he hurriedly inquired what the cause was of the condition in which he beheld her.

"Upon my word," stammered out Quandish, endeavouring, in vain, to gain the composure he desired, in order just to cover his retreat, "upon my word I scarcely know. I was merely passing by along the road, and saw a figure fall from the bank. I suppose she must have slipped from the top, or in attempting to come down the side; but I really can scarcely tell how the accident precisely occurred."

"Then *I* can supply the required information," exclaimed a voice from the summit, while Renmore and Quandish (secretly shrinking as the latter did in conscious guilt) both raised their heads to see who the person was that spoke, and recognised the features of old Mike.

"I am surprised," continued the old man, in the same vein of caustic and contemptuous irony in which we have already heard him addressing the mock-preacher,—“I am surprised you should be so ignorant of the circumstances of this accident! But, Colonel,” he continued, in an altered and somewhat lowered tone to Renmore, “bathe her dear lovely forehead in yonder rill that creeps through the moss from the rock on the opposite bank, and I will keep an eye on this hypocrite,

that he shall not (which he would be glad to do) escape your question, until all the little features," (he added, with a bitter sneer,) "of the *accident* are explained!"

Quandish augured little good to himself from the explanation of one whom he regarded, not only as so little friendly to himself, but who appeared, from the confidence and significance of his manner, so well enabled to utter the truth that should condemn him. To attempt flight would only be to convict himself at once; so he was constrained to await the menaced explanation, with a determination to contradict it, or excuse the circumstances as he best might. He exhibited at present, a well-pretended eagerness in offering assistance to Renmore in resuscitating the Beauty, whom he secretly trusted, notwithstanding all the efforts that might be made to bring her to herself, would not be sufficiently restored to be able to recognise him at once, and convict him of his inhumanity and guilt.

His offers of attention (or rather his officiousness) were, however, indignantly repelled by Renmore, who suspected the truth from Mike's manner, while he earnestly requested the old seaman to continue the explanation he had commenced.

"It was an accident, I am confident," exclaimed Quandish, interposing just as the ancient mariner

was about to open his lips. "I saw her fall down the bank—there was no one near to push her down it—her fall must have been accidental."

"No doubt, no doubt," continued Mike, "the whole matter was accidental. It is an accident, no doubt, that in my way from the Raventarn across the ridge yonder, I saw the poor dear thing running like a hunted deer across the Alder-moss, (as the open pasturage, skirted by alder trees, whither Gertrude had first of all escaped, was called,) and saw, too, the hound, the 'ban-dog,' that was in pursuit of her shew his foul muzzle, shortly after, on her track."

"What have I to do with this?" interposed Quandish, confusedly and angrily, while at the same moment Renmore exclaimed—

"And the hound?—who was it?"

"A hound that if ever he was rife on the scent of your own blood," replied Mike, looking at Quandish, "is so now. Oh! you should have heard him 'give tongue' (as the sportsmen say) as he chased yonder stricken deer to the spot where she met with this accident. You should have heard, though she did not, that hound,—and here he stands," (continued Mike, pointing to Quandish,)—"clamour after her, as she fled from his loathed presence, to tell her a tale injurious to one she esteemed,—to one, he termed a 'proscribed

felon.' It was an 'accident' truly, I will grant you, that *I* heard what she did not."

Mike was about to continue, when Renmore, unable any longer to restrain his indignation, as he approached Quandish, and consigned to Mike the care of Gertrude, who already shewed signs of resuscitation, exclaimed—

"Ungenerous as unmanly villain! is it thus you have taken advantage of my absence to wreak your mean vengeance on me and this weak female, in traducing me and inflicting pain on her in doing so? Were you not content by my keeping my word, in removing from a spot where you deemed my presence an obstacle to your nauseating suit? *Your* suit!—you little understood the nature of the person to whom *you* paid addresses, if you imagined that, to one of her generous spirit and estimable disposition, they could be otherwise than loathsome, coming as they did from a being whose character of baseness, low craft, and lurking villany, no artifices could disguise or conceal! But no longer will I bandy words with one so groveling, so despicable in his villany, so unworthy the nature of man. From this moment I defy you. I scorn any longer to temporize—to conciliate one I so heartily despise and abhor. Go; attempt to consign me at once if you please—and if you can—to the hands of justice. You have my challenge,

not merely my permission to do so. Add the ignoble character of betrayer and informer to that of villain."

"Your life, I tell you," interposed Quandish, his heart being bent on securing the "hush-money," ere he put in practice his contemplated perjury and betrayal—"Your life is secured to you as far as *I* am concerned. Remain my enemy if you please, but pay me the sum that I have a right to expect, and for which I have thus far exercised (and I will for ever exercise) forbearance in not discovering you."

"Away with the subject of 'myself,' and the wretched luckless life it is my lot to drag along! I will no longer stoop to listen to any terms by which a day longer shall be bought of it from *your* forbearance. Here is the sum," he said, holding up a heavy purse before the gloating eyes of Quandish, "in which your sordid spoil is centered, and of which I will now disappoint you. I value not that which it should buy. Not a penny of it shall you gloat upon, and exclaim in fiendish exultation—"Behold what I have won from his fears—the price of his blood!" From this moment I repeat—I defy you,—do your worst! I regard not myself;—I scorn you, and the utmost efforts of your malice as regards my own safety; but this unoffending, this weak as lovely being here,—was she,

because she regarded me with a confidence, an esteem, that you (such a thing as you) were never calculated to awaken—was she to be made the mark of your brutal, your dastardly and fiendish persecution? No; had you told her fifty times that I was the guiltiest of men, would she have valued me less from the accusation of such an one as you? Away, wretch, and avoid my presence, or it may be dangerous for you. Out of my sight, I say !”

Quandish’s infatuation however prevailed, and his effrontery being increased, doubtless because he was aware that he had to deal with a generous adversary, while his paltry fears for his personal safety were consequently set at rest, did not take the advice given him, but continued to irritate Renmore by a blustering demand for the sum he “claimed.” He was again warned to absent himself, when still persisting in his ill-timed provocation, Renmore, at length, lost all command of himself, and as they came now to the steep where the road looks down upon the entrance to Buttermere, he seized the despicable bully, and grappling with him, hurled him headlong down the height, where he left him, regardless whether he survived or not the shock that stunned him.

Meantime, Gertrude, recruited by the cool fountain-flood, and the attention offered her by old Mike

during the above parley between Renmore and his enemy, had been now brought somewhat to herself again. She had been lifted up on Renmore's horse by the assistance of himself and Mike, and they supported her, and proceeded at a slow pace towards the village, which was now close at hand. The sight of Renmore, in restoring to her a sense of security and protection, added no little to restore her also to animation and comparative tranquillity of mind.

It was the voice of Renmore now met her ear and gave renewed joy and confidence to her heart.

“To think I should have returned to find you thus the object of that wretch's unmanly annoyance! but fear not, love, it shall not assail you again. I am come to remove you from any further molestation on the part of this spirit of hypocrisy and ruffianism. I am come to fulfil my promise of taking you away from this spot, and removing from the hearts of both of us that uncertainty that has tried them so long. To-morrow there is afforded a good opportunity for seizing at length the long-withheld—the wished-for happiness. Our union shall no longer be delayed. You have heard, doubtless, of the boat-race that is to take place to-morrow on Derwentwater. By its banks, then, shall be the spot where we will meet—not on the Keswick side, but on the Borrodaile. Our good old friend Mike will accompany you to the lake side; there you shall enter my boat, for I must take a part in the

festival,—but fear not, I will not be separated from you. This I will arrange satisfactorily by to-morrow. All that it is requisite to say at this moment is, that you shall find me waiting to receive you, at the spot to which Mike will conduct you. An opportunity will be afforded me, during the bustle and confusion of the merry-making, to escape from the race, and hasten with you at once to Lorton. You have mentioned my proposals to you (as you told me before my leaving Buttermere) to Mr. Fenton. It is well,—he shall unite us, and nothing can then separate us—nothing, dearest,”—(and here his voice faltered as certain gloomy forebodings arose in his mind,)—“but death.”

So saying, he pressed his lips to hers, as she hid now in his bosom the tears that started from her eyes. While her head leaned there, he embraced her, and kissed her pale lips over and over again, in a transport of feeling, in which anguish mingled with gratitude and love. Fatal, indeed, were those charms, that could kindle in his breast a passion too powerful to withstand the conflict occasioned him by that anguish he now felt, at the consciousness of his dangerous condition, and which might one day entail its woe and shame on *her* head no less than his own. It was in vain these bitter whisperings woke in his heart; and they were silenced at once, when he considered that the grief he should occasion her by now confessing them, and breaking

off his engagement with her, would be scarcely less bitter than any future trial even to which she might be doomed, whenever she should be made sensible of the fearful predicament in which he stood ! Were he even to break off the engagement *now*, he felt he should be reluctant to inform her of the real reason for his doing so ; and, then, how imperfect would his excuses be ? They would seem only trivial, fictitious, dishonourable, and cruel to her,—to her, who had endured so much for him,—to her, whose return of his affection had been a world of happiness and solace in itself, when all the world beside frowned on him and abjured him.

Such were the thoughts that passed rapidly through his mind. There was, then, but one course for him to pursue,—that which he had just represented to her. Once more, then, he pressed her to his heart, and kissing away her tears, consigned her to the care of old Mike ; while he himself mounted on the steed from which she had been lifted, being now sufficiently recovered to be able, with the support of Mike, to pursue her way slowly to the village, which was now close in sight.

Renmore affectionately squeezed the old man's hand, offering at the same time to put ten pieces of gold in it, from the purse which had been originally intended for Quandish ; but it was declined by the old mariner, as he said—

“Nay, nay ; put your coin up. The old mariner is already too much in your debt ever to be able to repay you—not to talk of taking more of you. Remember the ‘tale of the deep,’ and the life he owes you ! The best return,” (he continued, muttering to himself,) “the old man can make you is to ask a boon from Heaven for your succour, and to turn aside the evil day. So speed,” he added, addressing Renmore again, in a lowered but urgent tone,—“speed at once from this spot, or it may be dangerous, for this Quandish, this Judas, may have prepared an ambush for you here. So speed, and to-morrow fear not to meet me with my charge. Not far from the place of our meeting is a rude solitary inn, between Rosthwaite and Derwentwater, where you may stay through the night without much hazard. So turn your horse’s head along yonder lane, to the northward ; it is a little roundabout, but may be the safest after all.”

The words were scarcely out of the old man’s mouth before our hero had vaulted into the saddle again, and was bearing fast away up the narrow road, or lane rather, pointed out by Mike. It led quite round the other side of the hills to the north of Buttermere, and then made a deflexion, gradually verging more and more to southward, till it led into a thick wood, which it traversed, and

at the furthest extremity of which stood the solitary hostelrie pointed out by Mike.

The old man's thoughts, in the warning he had just given Renmore to hasten away, had been directed to the circumstance that Quandish might possibly soon be in condition again to exercise his malice, and pursue the foul game of his betrayal and revenge. He might, even now, have satellites lurking about the spot, and watching for his signal to start out on their prey. These considerations again suggested themselves to the old man, as he said, looking after the track that Renmore had taken—"He speeds his way well. The clamp of his horse's hoofs already strike fainter on my ear. Night and Fate, befriend him!" And then, reverting to the "pseudo-preacher," who had gained the only reward he deserved, baffled as he had thus been in receiving the sum in spite of which he would have broken his faith to Renmore—"Ha, ha! did I not tell you," (muttered the old man, his lip curled with a bitter smile,)—"did I not tell you, you should be thwarted in your dearest wishes! The lucre you had yearned for, you have been mocked in gaining; and your own outrage itself deprived you of the opportunity of denouncing the boy," (so he called Renmore,) "to this poor dear thing here, rendered miserable as she was in the mischance that befel her in avoiding you! Did I

not tell you he should be a thorn in your side, and baffle you yet? Ay, and it shall be long ere you will entrap him, if old Mike has any forecasting in him to judge of the future! At present, I give you joy of your *accident* of to-day! It was almost as lucky an accident, too, that the ancient mariner's eye was upon you from behind the tree—when you thought to fly. Ha, ha!”

So saying, and half talking to himself, half addressing himself to Gertrude, old Mike conducted her to the *hostelrie* of the Traveller's Rest, and recommending her to seek the repose she so much required, he took leave of her, promising to meet her early on the hill the next morning, where her rural avocations would, as usual, call her.

Having seen her safe home, the old man now turned his eye towards a worthy clown who was loitering about the spot. This clown was no other than Jock, who was possibly still engaged in the important puzzle, as to what he should turn his hand to, now he was “at liberty” to do what he pleased? This varlet the old mariner forthwith enlisted into his service, to lead Gertrude's kine safe into their stalls for the night; and this being done, he left Jock to regale himself in the tap-room of the *hostelrie*, and strode off, (like a phantom through the growing night-shadows,) back to his domicile, or cell, in the crag side.

CHAPTER XII.

“A damsel guider of the way,
A little skiff shot to the bay.
Not Kattrine in her mirror blue
Gives back the shaggy banks more true
Than every freeborn glance confess’d
The guileless movements of her breast.”

SCOTT.

“Oh! haste, and leave this sacred isle!”

MOORE.

THE eventful morning of the aquatic gala dawned, and many a heart beat in joyful anticipation of the day's festivities. The scene of them was one of those picturesque little islands that stud the crystal expanse of Lake Keswick, (or Derwent-water,) and, at a distance, as you look down from the heights of Skiddaw, appear like so many emerald gems set in a sheet of silver, except when the crimsons of the setting sun burnish the flood, and then the emeralds sparkle yet brighter in a bordering of gold.

Waters of Keswick! what heart, whatever its

sore may be, but forgets the pang, or reconciles it to the dispensation of Providence, in communing with your charm, where the Creator's "dreadful brow" smooths it, in smiles of love and bounteousness? Who, in communing with the spirit of peace that pervades ye, would not desire to make his abode by your fair banks for ever,—screened from the strife of the world without, amid your mountain barriers, whose proud sides, down to the wave's brink, nature's dædal hand hath painted with the mosaic work of a thousand chequered lichens and "Hymettian" flowers? It was the whisper of a spirit like yours that held the "poet-child" of Nature to the banks of his cherished Avon, as he turned, at length, for peace to them, from life's fretful paths! It was a whisper soft as this, that held Spenser charm-bound to his wild and wandering Mulla—and, Wordsworth, thee, to the haunt of repose and calm beauty, in the chosen retreats of sweet Grasmere!

The smile of nature, of those glad sunbeams that lit up the maze in cheerfulness and softened the austerity of the mountain-crag above, was caught in joyous contagion by the hearts, and reflected in the gladsome faces of those crowds assembled round the scene of festivity. Motley groups of peasantry, with their happiest looks, and in holiday attire—bright-eyed maids and ruddy swains—might be seen throng-

ing from all sides of Derwentwater, from far Strands on one side and Coniston on the other, some on foot, some in carts, to see the boat-race. These, for the most part, contented themselves with lining the Keswick side of the lake, as the best site for witnessing the spectacle, in that mighty natural amphitheatre, of which Derwentwater is the centre. Those who were more immediately concerned in the "celebration," comprising the gentry who promoted the race, and those who were to be combatants in it, assembled together, with the bright array of ladies from the neighbourhood, on the island already mentioned, and off the shore of which was to be the starting-point of the race or regatta.

The oaks, at the period which we have in view, spread their venerable foliage over St. Hübert's island, the scene of festivity. Though now the spot is waste and bare, those trunks having fallen, (some beneath the axe of the woodman, some from decay,) yet, it was, as we at the time of our story regard it, one of grandeur and loveliness. The rose-light of summer-rays darted through those ancestral, those monastic oak-vistas—the wide magnificence of heaven's laughing azure—the ovation of all-rejoicing creation around—the wood-note of a thousand birds that carolled through the boughs—the discord echoes, grateful to the ear, of the

mallard's scream, as it skimmed over the smooth tide, dashing it with its wing and wheeling round in mazy gambolings,—the deer seen, some bowing their antlers, glassed in the pure flood where they stooped to slake their thirst—others gracefully couched in the moss and fern-beds strewn beneath that oak canopy—those hoar boughs, too, sweeping majestically over the wave-brink and forming an awning, now, for the gay little fleet of the regatta :—all these objects conspired to enhance the charm of the scene, and the festive occasion on which it was sought. That happy islet might, indeed, have been added to the blissful sisterhood of the golden Hesperides. And brighter yet was that island lit up in the joyous atmosphere of youth, of friendship, of beauty, of love, that shone round the happy sharers of the celebration of which it was the scene.

Independently of the residents in the neighbourhood, numerous strangers, who were visitors of the lake-districts, were present, and amongst them was the party (or *cortège*, we may call it more properly) of no less a personage than the celebrated Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Celebrated was she no less for her beauty than her benevolence,—her charms of disposition as of person ; and at whose entrance into the neighbourhood, it might have been whispered to our lovely heroine, to look even to *her* laurels.

The presence of this much-beloved and popular lady was greeted by loud cheering on the part of the people assembled; and seldom, indeed, did she go anywhere without making all who stood in need of it sensible of her bounty. The *cortège* that attended her was made up of persons of distinction of both sexes. Nor must it be forgotten to mention that, as an especial mark of her favour and patronage, a young lyric poet, of the name of Lillynore, who had just “imped his wing” with high honour to himself, formed one of her distinguished train; and doubtless his wit and his muse contributed to render her tour or “progress” (to use the old language of royalty) still more desirable.

The village maidens who were congregated on the different little islands on the lake,—all of which were made the seats of pleasure-parties, no less than St. Hubert’s isle,—had never witnessed such an array of their sex’s beauty and distinction, combined with such grace of attire, in all their rustic lives; and when they looked at their own simple, countrified charms,—all unadorned, or at the best humbly adorned,—they might well shrink abashed, as they witnessed how much enhancement and lustre even the brightest charms derive from the magic of attire, and the exercise of taste.

As a general rule, there is little doubt the magic

of attire infinitely aids personal charms ; though, again, on the other hand, it may be no less true in some peculiar and individual instance, that those personal charms may be so transcendent that the poet's rule of "when unadorned adorned the most" may be admitted unquestioned. Such might be the case, indeed, in the instance of the beautiful Duchess, for example, and certainly (and we may say so without any disparagement to her Grace) in that of our yet more lovely heroine. The brilliancy of the Duchess's complexion, and its pure transparency, could scarcely be exceeded ; but she wanted the rich auburn tresses of Gertrude ; nor were her features altogether so regular : her nose was a little more inclined to aquiline ; Gertrude's was of the fairest Grecian outline. It would be difficult to say of which of the two the eyes were the brightest, or beamed with the most intelligence and sweetness, where those of each dazzled the gaze and the heart so much. Gertrude had a little the advantage in height ; nor did the airiness and symmetry of the lovely herdmistress concede in charm to the grace of the aristocratic beauty's *tournure*, despite of all that the aid of fashion lent to its effect.

Having paid, then, due tribute to the charms of this illustrious visitant of the day's celebration, we turn to the rest of the fairer portion of the throng, to recognise amongst its bright

maze the soft pale cheek and gentle demeanour of Laura Lawton.

Since the singular and lawless circumstance of her seizure and abduction, Mr. Lawton had not ceased mentioning it, coupled with the acknowledgments which he rendered to "the Colonel," who had effected her rescue so promptly. Who the hardy being was that perpetrated the outrage had not been discovered. It may be imagined, that having witnessed the pain with which Laura saw our hero take leave of Blacktarn, we may expect her at present to look round the throng with no small anxiety to see him again.

We remember Mr. Lawton's having mentioned at Blacktarn the floral exhibition which was to take place previously to the aquatic festivities. The choicest specimens of Laura's conservatory were accordingly displayed, to the admiration of all who saw them. Never was the triumph of horticulturist more complete than hers, when Mr. Lawton referred to his daughter all the merit bestowed on their training; and his triumph was not less than hers when he heard the commendations showered on her.

The lovely Duchess presided at the distribution of the prizes. Where all was so beautiful, difficult indeed was it to say whether the flowers of that wide garden of human life did not outshine those

of the horticulturist's care. Flattered as poor Laura might have been, yet there was one from whom she would rather have received a syllable of approbation than from all the distinguished train that complimented her. It is scarcely necessary to say that this one person was our hero.

Renmore had not yet made his appearance; but when he did, what was the silent pang of mortified love (for it must be expressed) which she sustained, when, in the midst of her triumph—ere yet the murmur of approbation had died away—she witnessed his presence, accompanied as she now saw him! The person, whose praise she would have valued before that of every one else, advanced to the stand where the flowers were set forth, leading the humble village maiden, Gertrude, by the hand, while he bowed to the Duchess, as he thus addressed her:—

“Your Grace has witnessed some most beautiful specimens of my friend Mr. Lawton's garden; and that they would have borne off the prize from all others no one could doubt, who knew that the fair hand of Miss Lawton reared them;” and here he bowed to Laura with his usual grace of manner; “but your Grace has no doubt heard, on your visit to these romantic regions, of an object of attraction that all desire to see when they approach this neighbourhood; permit me, then, to present

to you the flower which we chiefly boast of in this Eden of the lakes,—the ‘Rose of Buttermere!’ and if her blushes burn a little more warmly than usual, it is because she has seldom appeared before so much splendour and distinction ; and, let me add,” (he continued, bowing,) “before charms that may well make her tremble for the supremacy of her own.”

All eyes were now turned on Gertrude, whose eye and countenance, animated as they were with the excitement of the festival, and the joy she had experienced in meeting our hero again that morning, according to her expectation, looked more transcendently lovely than ever. Even her fair fellows of the neighbourhood—her village compeers—who had known her from childhood, were held in the same trance of admiration in which every one now contemplated her.

Mr. Lillynore put up his glass, and first eyed his distinguished patroness, and then Gertrude, declaring to himself, “Upon my life I don’t know which is the loveliest creature of the two. I think (though I would not say so for the world) that I should find no such inspiration for an ode as in that lovely denizen of the lakes. She beats ‘Nora Creena’ even, to nothing—all to nothing!”

So saying, the bard continued feasting his eyes on our heroine, while Her Grace exclaimed, with

more than her usual benignity, rather than with any illiberal inklings on the score of her own charms being outshone—

“ Is this, then, the celebrated Beauty of Buttermere? I am most delighted to have been made acquainted with one I had so much desire to see. I'm sure, Mr. Lillynore,” she continued smiling, and turning to the melodist, “ here is a theme of inspiration from which the world might expect another series of Melodies.”

“ Divine! heavenly!” exclaimed the poet; “ she surpasses all I have heard of her; and if, as in the old times of chivalry, a prize for beauty were to be instituted, I am sure it would be round the neck of Gertrude of Buttermere that we should hang the chain, and wreath her brow with the rose-woven garland!”

“ Nay; we will not be behindhand with the gallantries of any age, however chivalrous,” replied the Duchess, smiling as she took from her neck a splendid chain of gold, with a topaz cross glittering at the end of it, and hung it round the neck of Gertrude, while she accompanied the gift with many kind words of esteem and countenance, of which she begged Gertrude to consider it as a remembrance.

Mr. Lillynore could scarce refrain his rapture, and declared to his next neighbour that he did not

know whether the charm of benignity that lit up his patroness's beauty did not even render her more beautiful than Gertrude herself. In truth, there was a grace and witchery in the distinguished person in question, that had no small effect in enhancing her natural charms, for she won all hearts by the graces of her condescension and generosity. The charms of her mind, the excellences of her heart, rendered her yet lovelier in the eyes of all who saw her ; and if this tribute is paid her now, perhaps the future events of our story, in which we may again meet her, will confirm us in offering such a testimony to her excellence.

Our hero, now, after having once again made a salutation to his Blacktarn friends, led Gertrude away, glowing amidst her blushes, with mingled gratification and confusion at having been thus singled out as the mark of observation in so brilliant and numerous a circle.

“Dear Gertrude,” whispered our hero in her ear, “have I kept my promise in meeting you? Blessings on old Mike for having brought you here to join me ! I never saw you look so beautiful. How my heart has beat for this moment ! To-day is to be fulfilled the engagement we had both agreed upon. The boat-race will give us a favourable opportunity. I will take advantage of a turning to be made round the furthest island, which will be the

course of the race, and row to the creek, northward, instead of returning. You will be taken with me in the boat I shall row ; and we will no sooner land than we will set off to Mr. Fenton's, and delay no longer to accomplish our union."

These words, uttered, as they were, in much less time than it has taken us to write them down, were answered by a pressure from the hand of Gertrude, and a smile that played on her sweet ruby lips, affording an answer to our hero that spoke to his heart more than any words could have done.

Other, far other, were the feelings of Laura. The increasing paleness on her cheek bespoke the silent pang of which she was sensible. She had looked forward to seeing Renmore by her side—to his conversation—attention—all it would have flattered at once and rejoiced her to receive from him. Little did she dream of his being engaged in marriage to another—and that other the humble, though lovely, herd-mistress ! Little did her heart now swell with any innocent pride, on the prize for the flower-exhibition being awarded to herself ; it was too much wrung to permit it to be sensible of any such pleasurable sensations, though all around expressed their gratification.

No little impression was made on the Duchess, and the distinguished party in her train, by the

happiness of manner with which our hero had offered an improvement on the exhibition, on his "presentation" of the "Rose of Buttermere."

"Vastly prettily managed—eh, Mr. Lillynore?" said one of the party to the bard.

"Delightful! And as for the girl, she is an impersonation of all loveliness, living or ideal—a very living poem!"

"*Who* is he?" asked the Duchess.

"Colonel Renmore," was the reply of one of the gentleman of the neighbourhood.

"Colonel *Renmore*?—that is *odd*! Is he any relation to the Member for Linlithgow?"

"The same, I believe," was the reply—"Renmore, of *Clan-renmore*."

"That is odd. There must be some *mistake*."

But whatever might have been the cause of the Duchess's surprise, or the purport of her remark, it was cut short by the shout that now announced that the boats were ready to start; and all persons forthwith adjourned to the brink of the island, where the various little skiffs, distinguished by pennons of different colours, were drawn up in line, and the rowers seated, with their oars poised over the boat side, ready to plunge them at once into the tide, and skim through it.

Each boat was distinguished by a colour named by different ladies respectively of the party. The

Duchess's colour was blue—"true blue"—the colour of Fox's voters at Westminster, when she canvassed for him. This skiff was rowed by a gentleman of her retinue. Miss Lawton's boat was marked by a violet flag; but the interest of the race was lost to her, no less than that of the flower exhibition, in which she had won the prize. The hues of those rose-blossoms her care had fostered—could she not borrow a tint of their lustre to warm the faded light in her own soft cheek?

"You are not well, child?" said her father, tolerably aware of the cause of her secret mortification, since he partook of it in no small degree himself. "On whom is it your eyes are fixed amongst the rowers of those boats?—on Colonel Renmore? Oh, never mind looking at *his* boat; look at that which bears your own colours."

"Yes," she replied; "but don't you see there is some one in his boat?"

"Pooh! he is, I observe, just by way of being good-natured, letting that village girl, whom they call the Beauty of Buttermere, have a 'row' in his boat, in order, poor thing, to complete her 'holiday-making.'"

So said the worthy lord of Blacktarn, who, though he tried to rally his daughter's spirits by speaking thus indifferently, was not sorry to propose to her to retire from the front ranks of the

festive group ; and, accordingly, having led her to the other side of the little island, he was no less content than herself to withdraw from the festivity, whose celebration had been thus untowardly clouded for them both ; and having stepped into a boat, they rowed to shore without more delay, and returned forthwith to Blacktarn.

Mr. Lawton felt both mortified and indignant at having many fond speculations, as regarded our hero and his daughter, damped by witnessing, on the late occasion described, how little she received of his attentions. Perhaps he might have been too rash and sanguine, in having formed such speculations. This, however, was the error of his temperament and character ; and if, at present, he is seen to have cause of discontent, he may perhaps hereafter have reason to acknowledge the truth of the old adage, (in opposition to Voltaire,) of “all being for the best ;” and, with this remark, we will, for the present, take leave of himself and Laura, and return to the scene of the “regatta,” as now about to take place.

No spectacle, in fact, is more interesting, under a glowing summer sky and upon a pure glassy expanse of lake, than a boat-race. Ye who have passed joyous hours on the lakes of Upper Italy, voyaging from myrtle-bowered islet to islet,—ye, again, who have marked the happy peasants on the

Swiss lakes, voyaging with their market produce,—(teeming melon, and gourd, and grape,)—well will ye remember the calm sweets of those scenes, rural at once and aquatic. The tranquil content of the heart was emblemed in that pure calm flood over which those motley forms glided, and in which many a cheerful brow glassed itself, as it looked in smiles on the wave of loveliness. But wilder cheerfulness respired through a scene like this now before us. The spirit of emulous joy, that swelled in the bosoms of those competitors for the meed of dexterity, echoed a new song of gladness through the fair watery bound.

The presence of the Beauty of Buttermere in our hero's boat has been already specified. There she sate, like the lovely Battelière of Lake Lemman, on the Vevay coast, of a later day, and acted as "steerswoman;" for having been so long a habitant of this region of the flood no less than mountain, she had added to her other rural accomplishments that of much adroitness in the management of a skiff.

Forward flew Renmore's boat, to which she thus imparted an additional object of interest, and which speedily took the lead, by some distance, of the whole train of skiffs that followed.

Scarcely had the burst of cheering subsided, amidst which the rowing-match had set off, when

the attention of the spectators was called to a loud and vehement shouting from the border of the lake on which Keswick stands. The cause of this shout was beyond the solution of any one present; but whatever it might be, its tone appeared to indicate that some circumstance of danger, or alarm, had taken place, which it was hoped would soon be explained by a person who was now seen rowing with all his might towards the island. Meantime, as if by magic, as if raised by the spirit of the lake, a little bark appeared in the middle of the waters, carrying as its master a venerable old man, who impelled his boat in the direction of Remore's, which had now more and more gained in distance upon the rest of the train, and was very nearly arrived at the furthest island, where the turning was to be made previously to the boats coming back again to their original place of starting.

“What boat is that?” asked one of the spectators, “and who is the old man in it?”

“I know not,” replied his next neighbour, “unless it be old Mike. His movements are often unaccountable, and whence he made his appearance thus suddenly on the lake I can't imagine. All I know is, that he is not where he is without some good reason. I should not be surprised if his presence there has some connexion with the sub-

ject of alarm that has just been announced to us in the shout from shore."

Such was the reply which was made by one of the party, who, as being a resident in the neighbourhood and acquainted with Mike, was able, thus far, to form a conjecture on this new topic of surprise.

His conjecture was not a mistaken one. The form that appeared in that boat was the "ancient mariner's." It was from a bay in the furthest islet, just specified as the goal of the race, that his skiff had glid forth on the lake, unseen by the spectators on the other island, just at the time when their attention was called to the shout that arose from the Keswick, or opposite border. How far the conjecture above expressed was correct—namely, that the ancient mariner's sudden presence had some unaccountable connexion with this cause of alarm—we are unable as yet to determine. Suffice it at present to say, that with scarcely more than three strokes of his oar, his skiff was by the side of Renmore's, when he said, in a wary tone, and leaning over the boat's side—"You hear that shout from shore? . . . Row for your life!"

Scarcely were the words out of the ancient mariner's lips than Renmore's boat had glided into the creek by the north shore of the lake. The

water just here formed a narrow strait between the islet and the shore, and as Renmore's boat was far in advance of all the others, he had turned the corner of the islet which was the goal of the race, and was hidden in the creek before a single one of the other boats of the train had arrived in the strait. When they had arrived, their rowers, not seeing Renmore's boat, concluded of course that he had turned the goal, or rounded the islet, and was on his way back to the starting-place, out of their sight. Be this as it might, Renmore, with his lovely freight, had disappeared like a morning mist from the face of the waters.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Adoun he go’th, and tell’eth the master sone,
In what array he saw this ilke man,
The master-wight to blissen him began,
And said, ‘ Now helpe us, Seinte Fredeswide,
A man wote litel what shal him betide.’ ”

CHAUCER.

It would be an ill compliment to the reader’s gallantry to suppose, notwithstanding the galaxy of female attraction he has already witnessed, that he has not missed the charm of Miss Howbiggen’s presence from amongst it. Of all others, this lady had looked forward with interest to the day’s festivities. It must therefore be our duty, before we proceed to anything else, to explain the causes of a delay that has hitherto deprived the island assemblage of the fascination and ornament of one so well calculated to offer both. And it may, possibly, be the case, that in entering upon the solution of this important point, we may also be

enlightened with regard to the import of the sudden presence and warning of old Mike as just witnessed.

A person so alive to all that is due to an observance of the "social charities" as Miss Hetty Howbiggen, was of course on the alert to set forth on the happy morning of the regatta. The carriage was already at the door, and she was awaiting the presence of her "amiable" brother, in order that they might proceed at once on the expedition. At last, the invalid made his appearance; his brow contracted and his back bowed; coughing and grumbling by turns.

"I don't at all wish to go," he said, "not at all,—ugh, ugh!"

"My dear brother, when did you ever wish to be obliging? Come, pray say,—are you going or are you not?—if you are not going, do (I beg of you) let me know this at once, that I may proceed by myself. The carriage has been at the door for almost an hour past, and yet you seem to stand irresolute as to whether you will go or not. This is really sadly provoking. Come, what will you do?"

Mr. Howbiggen, who had been standing on the brink of departure, with the indecision of a chilly bather who hesitates ere he plunges into the liquid depth, was now "peppered" into a different feel-

ing from that of his chill of indecision. He now kindled into something like warmth, under the goad of provocation, which he considered his worthy sister's urgency to be.

“ Ugh !—‘ sadly provoking’ is it, my not gratifying your impatience in a moment ! Thank you for the complim—— (ugh, ugh !—coughing,) compliment. I think it is enough to make a man hesitate,—such a cold on his chest and cough as I have.”

Here a violent fit of coughing ensued, which occasioned a delay, not only in Mr. Howbiggen's upbraiding, but in the departure for Keswick, which was even yet more to Miss Howbiggen's dissatisfaction ; for her brother's grumbling she considered a “ matter of course,” and she took it good-humouredly ; in fact, she would have been surprised at any other mode or character of address on his part. But the delay, protracted more and more as it now was, occasioned her positive anguish. She was ready to cry with impatience, and could scarcely forbear stamping her delicate foot on the ground, as she exclaimed—

“ Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! this is dreadful,—perfectly dreadful !”

However, she softened the impatience of her tone into an accent of somewhat more concern, on perceiving the violence of the cynic invalid's coughing. His eyes appeared to be almost

starting from the sockets, in the straining occasioned him; while his cheeks were bloated and puffed out to a formidable tension, something like that of the representations of Boreas, and their colour was livid as an over-ripe fig. No wonder Miss Howbiggen was alarmed at this spectacle.

“Good gracious! my dear Tobias,” (such was Mr. Howbiggen’s baptismal appellative,) “this is more serious than I imagined your cough could have been. Well, suppose you stay, and I will go alone without further hesitation on the subject.”

“No, no!” replied Tobias, wiping his eyes, which had been watering copiously, and still coughing, though in a diminished degree—“no, no; I will accompany you,—you wished that I should do so,—you shall have your own way; but mark my words, the damp from the water will increase this affection of the chest,—this business will be the death of me.”

“Then why not stay?” interposed Miss Howbiggen, her impatience kindling again.

“No, no!” rejoined Tobias, passing on with a cool, upbraiding air; “you shall have your way, (I tell you again,) of forcing me to go with you.”

“Nay, nay! there is no ‘forcing’ you at all. I thought merely it would amuse you to go.”

“Mind,” continued the crabbed invalid, pretending to act under constraint, and exhibiting

himself as though wronged by his sister, in a manner that might reasonably provoke that lady's impatience,—“mind, this affair will infallibly be the death of me. I go to please you,—well, well!”

“Then, pray stay,” cried Miss Howbiggen; “I'm sure, whatever is most satisfactory to yourself will please me best.”

Our cynic, however, passed on to the carriage, without taking any notice of her request; only gratifying his spleen by his usual grumbling reflections. “It is always so. Whenever one is ill, there is sure to be some pestiferous engagement of this kind,—ugh, ugh! When a man does not wish to go out, he is sure to be plagued to do so; and when he does wish it, he is sure to be ill and unable to go; or if he does go, is little fit to do so. Provoking and contradictory!” Thus saying, he took his seat in the carriage, while Miss Howbiggen seated herself by his side.

Away, then, they went, nor did our invalid open his lips, or rouse him from his sour reverie for some time. At last he exclaimed—

“Well, thank Heaven, we have got down that hill without being overturned!” which ejaculation he was delivered of as the carriage had now arrived at the bottom of the Borrodaile steep, and was proceeding with accelerated pace along the southern margin of Derwentwater, on its way to

Keswick, which was close at hand. "Thank Heaven!" he continued, "we were not upset and rolled 'head over heels' into the lake, like one of the water fowl you may see making 'summersets' over its surface. It is a wonder we were not!"

"No wonder at all, Mr Howbiggen, begging your pardon," replied his more amiable sister; "if the coachman exercises caution, and understands the management of his horses, I don't at all see why we should expect any such misadventure."

"Pooh, pooh! I tell you that down such a steep as this which we have just passed, a mere crow flying across the way and startling the horses might have occasioned an overthrow, and the forfeit of our necks. I have known the accident happen a dozen times since our unlucky visit in this tiresome neighbourhood. Why, the shadow of those wind-mill sails thrown across the path, just at the bottom of the ascent, has occasioned many a horse to run away. Lord, what a jangle and noise those bells of Keswick make! I wish they were muffled."

"A most uncharitable wish, I'm sure," replied Miss Howbiggen, who was delighted to hear the merry peal which echoed clamorously from the belfry of Keswick church tower, and sounded over the waters of the lake below, announcing a day of revel and holiday-making.

"Ay, ay; those bells may have to chime forth a

different lay before the sun has set !” grumbled out the cynic ; “ for it is a hundred chances to one but that somebody or another will be drowned in this nonsense of boat-racing and water-frolic. Foolery on dry ground is mischievous enough, without making matters yet more insecure. Ugh! —umph! —ugh !”

“ Do cease this dreadful croaking !” exclaimed Hetty, now almost losing her patience under the provocation occasioned by her brother’s unrelenting asceticism ; and she was just going to launch forth into a tirade of philosophy, grounded upon a more cheerful foundation of reasoning than his own, when her attention, no less than Mr. Howbiggen’s, was called to the circumstance of a loud clamour and dispute which reached their ears, as they passed now through the principal street of Keswick, on their way to the hostelry, where their carriage was to be left while they proceeded on foot to the lake-border.

The clamour arose from a knot of persons collected in front of the “ post-office ;” and as Miss Howbiggen, with characteristic curiosity, was all anxiety to know what the subject of dispute “ could possibly be,” she pulled the check-string and desired the coachman to draw up on the opposite side of the street for a moment, with a view to overhearing what passed, and informing herself of the desired intelligence.

“Pshaw!—pooh!” observed her brother; “who wants to know what the cause of dispute is? What is the good of stopping here in this idle, absurd, obstinate, dawdling, useless manner?”

The splenetic gentleman would in all probability strung on a yet greater multiplicity of testy epithets, had he not been stopped short by his sister saying—

“Hush! Mr. Howbiggen; the cause of dispute is more important than you imagine. I am confident I heard the name of Colonel Renmore uttered——”

“Pshaw!—pooh!——”

“I’m sure I did! Pray listen a moment.”

“Ugh! I knew there would be some jangling—some disturbance, or accident—before this day of holiday-making had passed; but I little expected to find my words made true so speedily!”

“Now, pray don’t grumble any more just at present, Mr. Howbiggen, but listen. Don’t you hear that man, the master of the post-office, accuse the little gentleman in a brown great coat, with a red worsted cravat folded round his throat, of having forged the signature of Colonel Renmore?”

“What!” replied Mr. Howbiggen, now involuntarily being roused into something like a participation in his sister’s interest in the subject of dispute. “What do you say?”

“Do you not hear what the man says?—he accuses that gentleman of having franked a letter in the name of Colonel Renmore, ‘for which person he pretends to pass himself off!’ These were his words.”

Mr. Howbiggen made no reply, but leaned his person forward from the carriage window, in order to hear more clearly the charge, in her account of which he thought his sister might be mistaken, as he was always inclined to be somewhat sceptical as to the exact authority of her “hearsays.” In truth, as we may remember, they were a little questionable.

Thus, then, the tide of dispute rolled on in front of the post-office, and the following were the objurgations addressed by the post-master to the before-mentioned little gentleman in the brown great coat and red worsted “cravat.”

“I say, you have been franking a letter in the name of Renmore, which you had no business to do! And I shall have you taken up.”

“You scoundrel!” replied the little gentleman, very much excited; “take your hand off my collar this instant! How dare you be guilty of such an outrage, or charge me with passing myself off as another? How dare you, I say——”

“Ay, ay,—it is all very well talking; but you shall talk to the constable and the magistrate too,

since you don't admire talking to me. Holloa ! Master Groat, I'm glad to see you here—here's a gentleman I must recommend to your company, in order to walk with him to Justice Briggs."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked a stalwart, tall, ruddy-faced yeoman, cased in corderoy, as regarded the fashion of his "nether man," and in well-worn velveteen, as regarded his upper. This worthy was Master Groat, the constable, who now laid his clutch on the shoulder of the accused person,—whose wrath was kindled yet more and more to witness himself thus deprived of his liberty, to say nothing of the insult offered his dignity, if, indeed, the charge of being an impostor and post-office swindler were really without foundation.

"I say ! let go your hold of me !—how dare you offer this outrage to a member of parliament in the exercise of his privilege ! You shall bitterly repent this ! Everybody knows me ! Everybody knows Colonel Renmore."

"Ay, to be sure, every one does !" exclaimed both the postmaster and Master Groat the tip-staff. "And every one knows you are not the man," they added.

"*He* the man !" exclaimed one of the crowd, "that he is not. Colonel Renmore only passed through Keswick a short time ago, and is now with

the company on the lake, where the boat-racing is going on."

"Take him away to the justice!" cried another of the crowd. "We all know he is not Colonel Renmore!"

"Nay, that he certainly is not," observed Miss Howbiggen to her brother.

"How do you know that?" growled out that sceptical gentleman. "Appearances often go against the most honest and honourable of men. I'm not at all so sure that this gentleman they are handling so unceremoniously is any other than the person he describes himself to be."

"Well, then, if he is the real Colonel Renmore, why, the one whom we know must be the impostor—unless there are two members of parliament of the same name."

"Pshaw! you might as well talk of two tails to the same horse. But just be quiet, my good Hetty, one moment—I want to hear what the accused gentleman says."

"If I really am an impostor take me by all means to the magistrate," exclaimed the gentleman under arrest, "but I warn you first of all to be a little more sure whether you are taking an innocent man into custody or a scoundrel."

"Oh, we are sure enough of that!" exclaimed Master Groat, while the mob set up a shout of

laughter, by way of chorus to the chuckle that accompanied the constable's words, as he proceeded to "hawl along" his captive to Justice Briggs's domicile, on the hill.

"That is the best argument the worthy M.P. can utter," chuckled out the post-master, triumphing in the arrest of the accused person. "'If I am innocent,' he says,—that is capital!—'if—'"

"Yes, *if*!" replied the arrested member; "you had better not subject yourselves to penalties for a 'breach of privilege,' in arresting a member of parliament," he continued, in a voice hurried and broken by the excitement of his anger, which the mob instantly mistook for fear, and shouted out that "his look alone would condemn him!"

"Pshaw!" observed Mr. Howbiggen; "what man is there who would not exhibit consternation were he solemnly accused of being a swindler or murderer, by a set of people unwilling to let him explain his innocence? Why, I should look frightened to death!"

"I came here," continued the M.P., "with a party of friends and people of distinction; let them be summoned at once, and they will inform you who I am!"

"Where are they, then?—where are they?" exclaimed post-master, mob, and constable, with one acclaim.

“They ought to be at the island on the lake—they are gone to witness the boat-race. I remained behind here, to write some letters, with the intention of joining them after I had despatched the letters. I tell you, bring my friends here, that they may inform you who I am—I came here with the Duchess of Devonshire and other friends, and I insist, this instant, on your sending for them and liberating me.”

How far Master Groat, and the ragged cavalcade at his heels, would have been inclined to listen to their captive's representation, it is difficult to pronounce, had not an advocate for his cause sprung up, in the person of a man who, having gleaned intelligence of the cause of the village uproar, had forced himself forward to the constable, as he exclaimed—

“Take that gentleman another step further at your peril—he is no other than the person he represents himself to be—I have good reasons for knowing that he speaks the truth, and, my good friends,” he continued, turning round to the crowd, “when did I ever deceive you yet?”

“No, no, Measter Quandish, the worthy preacher of Buttermere, (for it was himself,) speaks rightly enough. Let go the gentleman, and let us hear Measter Quandish's reasons for thinking him innocent!”

So spoke the mob, while the brawny hand of Groat was removed from the shoulder of his captive, as the attention of every one was now directed towards Quandish.

To account for this individual's sudden appearance in the scene before us, it appears that having, after no very long time, recovered from the effects of the shock he sustained under the chastisement of our hero, he slunk off to Keswick at once, in order to summon the myrmidons of justice, to aid him in securing Renmore. These persons, we remember, he had pledged himself to remove and dismiss from their pursuit, on the occasion of being promised the "hush-money" by our hero, on their first meeting. He had, however, taken care they should not quit the spot, and had only suspended their pursuit, which he now, more warmly than ever, urged them to renew. He told them he had sanguine hopes of being able at length to trepan the object of their common search, as, no doubt, he would be present, under some disguise or other, at the boat-race.

Lurking, then, in Keswick with these malignant considerations, Quandish was now delighted to find a ready clue given to the object he panted to attain. All anxiety was he to corroborate the truth of the arrested gentleman's declaration of his innocence. All eagerness was he to proceed with

Groat to the "lake-island," (to which he had already intended proceeding,) in order to arrest the "real frank-forgery," the real impostor, and *soi-disant* M.P. Meantime, having been regarded by the mob with reverence, on account of his character of preacher, every word he uttered found weight with them, as he proceeded thus in his task of exculpation of the accused person.

"You may take my word for it, my friends, this gentleman is the *real* Colonel Renmore."

"Then *who* is the man that has passed himself off all this while upon us as the 'Parliament-man,' and 'Colonel,' and Lord knows what?" asked, simultaneously, two or three voices in the crowd, pre-eminent amongst which was that of Master Groat, the constable.

"The man that has so passed himself off is no less than the notorious forger and swindler—Hatfield!"

"Hatfield? What? the famous '*Gemman* Hatfield?'" (so they pronounced his *soubriquet* of "gentleman,") exclaimed every one present, including not only Groat and the master of the post-office, who was the accuser, but the accused M.P. himself.

"Hatfield!" screamed out Miss Howbiggen, as she leaned forward from the carriage window. "Who would possibly have thought it?"

"Oh, very possible, indeed!" replied Mr.

Howbiggen, doggedly; "I told you to take care what new acquaintances you made. I thought this pretended Colonel and M.P. would turn out but dross instead of the 'real metal,' after all. '*Gentleman* Hatfield!—he, he, he! You seem surprised," he added with a sneer. "What will he take for his property in Caithness?—he, he!"

"Who was possibly to tell?" replied Miss Howbiggen, with an indignant toss of the head, signifying her unwillingness to admit she had been made a dupe of—"His manners were so perfectly that of a gentleman."

"A gentleman!—he, he!—I thought some such *denouement* to this 'gentleman-like' farce would exhibit itself sooner or later."

"You could think no such thing, Mr. Howbiggen," replied his sister, pettishly. "If I was deceived, or duped as you term it, (and which you are amused to think that I was,) why, you too were duped as well, and everybody else in the neighbourhood—Mr. Lawton and Laura Lawton——"

"He, he!—poor Lawton!—poor little Laura! '*Gentleman*' Hatfield!—he, he!"

Thus did the ascetic Howbiggen amuse himself with a topic which others would have regarded with feelings more akin to concern and surprise combined.

During this colloquy between the occupants of

the Howbiggen carriage, Quandish was proceeding to fortify his declaration of the fact that no other than Hatfield was the person who had been passing himself off in the neighbourhood as Colonel Renmore, by challenging all present to hasten at once to the island on the lake, and lay hands on the felon, if there he should prove to be, as he suspected.

A spark of fire alighting on a heap of combustible matter would not have sooner kindled it into a blaze, than the challenge of Quandish kindled the crowd into impatience, at once to proceed and place the impostor in the situation of arrest which had but a moment ago been so unpleasantly occupied by the "real Simon Pure," the real M.P. and Colonel, &c.

This much outraged gentleman had now recovered his calmness and equanimity, being no longer inconvenienced by the pressure of Master Groat's clutch on his shoulder, or of the mob's footsteps at his heels. In fact, knowing the celebrity of character possessed by the arch-impostor who had assumed his name, he was willing to excuse the mistake of the honest village authorities, in denouncing him as they had done. He was softened, moreover, by the apologies that Groat and the postmaster now uttered, as profusely as they had before expressed suspicions and bandied jests, at the expense

of one whom they considered as making much too lame a story to assure them of his innocence.

In fact, the worthy gentleman had stated what they subsequently found to be altogether the truth—namely, that he was one of a party of visitants to the scenery of the lakes. It appears that having had some letters to frank, he had ordered them to be put into the post-office, as he passed down the street on his way to the lake, when the post-office master declared that the Honourable Member had already franked his number, and the letters were accordingly returned. Colonel Renmore immediately remonstrated, and being shewn the letters franked with his name, (specimens of Hatfield's "obligingness," as heretofore witnessed,) he at once declared them a forgery. His story, it is needless to observe, was not credited at the time, and himself was placed in the disagreeable light of an impostor; and hence the source of the uproar that greeted our friends, Mr. and Miss Howbiggen, on their entry into the pretty little town of Keswick.

But all parties were now hastening, like a clamorous brood of waterfowl, to the lake-margin; while Quandish, in his over-eagerness, distancing the rest, pushed off in the only boat that remained, leaving honest Groat, and the crowd of village geese at his heels, cackling aloud their dismay at not being able to embark on the pursuit for which all were so

eager ; nor could all the oratory of the real M.P. quiet their clamour or appease their dissatisfaction.

“ We had hoped to have soused the swindler in the lake,” said one.

“ I would just as lief souse Measter Quandish for pushing off in this way without me,” grumbled out the constable ; “ he moight ha’ waited for me, one should think.”

“ He will be brought to shore,” calmly observed the real Colonel Renmore ; “ and then you can at once convey him to the magistrate.”

“ Ay ; and you may duck him and Quandish too !” giggled out Mr. Howbiggen, who had now with his sister arrived at the border of the lake, swelling the group of anxious expectants for the capture of the “ renowned Hatfield.”

“ And so we will !” was exclaimed on all sides.

And, cheered by this resolve, the villagers managed to console themselves for the trick they considered Quandish had played them in starting off on the chase, from which they by no means wished to have been so thrown out.

As for Quandish, a philosopher would be induced to remark, that over impatience in pursuing its object too often fails of success, as much by overstepping it as falling short of it. Miss Howbiggen was not a little vexed to see that he had gone off in the only boat there was left, as just

mentioned ; all the others having been engaged and taken off previously.

“ Why, how vexatious ! how shall we be able to arrive at the island !—dear, dear !”

“ Oh, ma’am,” observed Groat to her, “ you need not ‘ fret’ much. You are too late à’ready for the flower show and the starting of the regatta. Why, you ought to have been here long ago, bless you.”

“ Well ! if I ever knew anything so vexatious !—this is all through your delay, Mr. Howbiggen, in not setting out in proper time !—very vexatious, I must say !”

Mr. Howbiggen, however, sympathized but little in her vexation. On the contrary, so far from apologizing or expressing concern at his own delay and her disappointment, he only increased the provocation already given, by grinning sardonically at her discomfiture. Nay, he repeated his declaration, that this “ water frolic” would be the death of him.

“ Here am I, kept standing over the damp atmosphere of this water,” he said, coughing ; “ I think it is *I* who ought to complain more than any one else.”

Thus, then, will we leave these good people, with their respective causes of dissatisfaction, standing by the shore, with the mob near them, in

expectation of the capture of Hatfield. We will, meantime, place ourselves on the island already specified, in order to observe, with the rest of the spectators on its shore, the movements of the greedy captor, Quandish, who was now rowing might and main to reach it, much to the surprise and marvel of the persons on the island.

“Why, this fellow,” observed Mr. Lillynore, “appears as much to be rowing for a prize as any one of the regatta combatants.”

“Indeed ! so he does !” was the reply ; “and talking of the combatants, look, they are coming back, and without Colonel Renmore. He was at their head in the commencement of the race. I expected to see him return so too.”

“Indeed, yes ; I fancied he would be the winner ; and I’m sure,” said the young bard, “I wished he might be, for the sake of that lovely creature who acted as his steerswoman ; for success in the race depends not a little on the art of the person steering, as well as on that of the rowers. As she sate at the helm, she looked lovely as Circe floating round her own enchanted island.”

The surprise expressed here, at Colonel Renmore’s being missing from the ranks of the race, was fully participated in by his fellow combatants, who could not imagine what had become of him. For, as we have already shewn, he had been so

much a head of them in the outset of the race, that on arriving at the little island which was the "goal" of the race, he had time, unperceived by them, to run his skiff behind it, into the bay of the main shore opposite. Here, then, he had landed, and escaped with the Beauty, while they fancied he had turned the corner of the goal; but on rounding it, they found he had disappeared.

However, they continued rowing on, back to the starting point, and were now fast approaching to the island-shore whence they set out, when old Mike's boat glided in between the course of the racing boats and Quandish's.

"Here's a fellow come to spoil your sport, gentlemen," cried the old man to the foremost combatant in the race; "what if we teach him better manners?"

The word "informer" at the same time escaped the old mariner's lips, accompanied by a significant smile that implied mischief. The word that he had uttered required no further explanation of any accompanying circumstances. The seed of mischief was sown, and old Mike now proceeded to reap the fruit. With two or three strokes of his oar, he had now come between the shore and Quandish's boat.

"Hah! Master Quandish, is it you?"

"Make way! make way, man!" cried the im-

patient myrmidon of justice. "This is not a time for trifling. I come to apprehend a——"

But scarcely had the luckless Quandish opened his lips, than the violent concussion of a boat running against his own, knocked him off his seat into the water.

Mike, in fact, after having "hailed" the informer (as we have just witnessed), rapidly shot by him; and then, with all the dexterity of an expert boatman, wheeled his boat round, and with a stroke of his oar in which he centered all his strength, drove his skiff full upon the stern of Quandish's boat, driving it in such a direction that it would be necessarily forced counter to the course of the boats of the rowers, which were now fast approaching the shore at the termination of the race.

This interruption to the proper conclusion of the race called forth cries of disapprobation from the spectators on the shore, at the expense of the luckless Quandish.

"Duck him! Upset his boat! What does he mean by coming in the way and spoiling the race! Duck him!—drown him!"

It is almost needless to observe, that these friendly suggestions from shore were very readily responded to on the part of the baffled rowers, more especially as Mike had communicated to

them, as we have already witnessed, the character and vocation of the intruder.

Great, then, was the scene of confusion which now took place in the shallow water of the shelving shore of the island. With a shout of delight, the foremost rower in the race had witnessed Mike's boat "bump" (to use an expression of aquatic racing) the boat of the informer; and not a moment intervened before he, together with his brother rowers, all "bumped" the poor informer's boat in succession, as they arrived at the shore. The luckless subject of this rough discipline having at length, with no small difficulty, scrambled to the land, was assailed on all sides, by the spectators there, for thus spoiling the termination of the race, and by the rowers also, for being not only an intruder on their course, but one of so sordid and vile a character.

It was in vain that the luckless man raised his voice, declaring the importance of the errand on which he had come;—no one of his present audience would listen to him, or give him credence.

The beautiful Duchess, however, in spite of the amusement which the ducking, diving, sousing, and clamour had occasioned, declared still, "that it was very singular that the 'poor man' (as she was charitable enough to style Quandish) should

persist so vehemently in his statement ;” which was, that the person who was present a short time past, bearing the name of Colonel Renmore, had assumed a designation to which he had no right.

“ At any rate,” she added, “ what the man says is true, so far—namely, that Colonel Renmore, to whom that name really belongs, is on shore at Keswick. I know this, for he was one of our party.”

“ Vastly singular !” said Lillynore, humming a French air, “ *Oh, que c’est une drôle affaire.*”

The words of the fair Duchess made some little impression, though unaided as yet by any more corroborative proof ; but if this were wanting, it was now speedily supplied ; and the “ mawling” which the unhappy Quandish had undergone was destined to cease when a party of persons, having at length procured boats, now landed on the island from the Keswick strand.

These persons were the real Colonel Renmore, the post-master, and the constable ; and this *réunion* of parties took up little time in making the conclusion plain ;—namely, that Quandish’s story was true, and that the Duchess’s doubts were too well founded. Herself and every one else were intent on the account given of his singular arrest at the post-office, by the real Colonel Renmore. The tale, too, was illustrated at once, and further corroborated, by the interesting “ by-play” of Miss

Howbiggen, who, now, together with her brother, had also joined their forces to those on the island.

The result of the whole explanation of these singular events was, instantly to set forth, on the part of Quandish and the constable, in pursuit of the "pseudo" Colonel Renmore. Accordingly, these two worthies placed themselves in a boat to commence their voyage of discovery.

"Which way had we better steer?" inquired the constable.

"Ask old Mike—he is the man," observed a stander by.

Quandish sullenly observed, "You may ask him if you will ; but," (he would have added,) "I know he would rather *cover* the retreat of the fugitive than *discover* it." However, he did not give expression to his thoughts, considering that the ancient mariner might possibly betray to others, under the inducement of a bribe, perhaps, what he would not discover to himself.

The base spirit of the "informer" miscalculated the disposition of good old Mike, and formed an opinion too much suited to his own taste ; but not, therefore, (as he supposed,) conformable to the more generous spirit of Mike.

The constable, however, being laudably willing to save himself as much trouble in his investigation as he could, exerted his lungs as loudly as the

best of those whose chorus of bawling now demanded, "Where is old Mike?"

Echo, as the poet has it, might indeed answer "where?" for Mike was not present to answer for himself. In vain they called, and clamoured, and looked for him.

Furtively as he had first of all glided into view upon the surface of the lake, so had he now as suddenly and furtively disappeared from it; and the stalwart constable, with his vindictive comrade, Quandish, were accordingly left to pursue their voyage of discovery as their sagacity might best guide them.

Honest Groat, the village constable, was, in the estimation of Quandish, but a poor substitute for the more experienced myrmidons of the metropolitan police, which were lurking at Keswick, ready to start on the track of the fugitive. It was Quandish's intention, then, if he did not speedily glean some tidings of the course Renmore (for so the circumstances of our story will oblige us to call him a little while longer) had taken, to return to Keswick and avail himself of the aid of these better satellites of justice. In the present emergency, however, he was resolved to make the best of the services of Master Groat.

Such, then, were the singular events of the day's festivity. They afforded ample theme for discus-

sion and speculation to the whole neighbourhood of Keswick—Buttermere in particular—for months on months after. Every other topic of “gossipry” in Miss Howbiggen’s circle was absorbed in this sole and engrossing one—“How ‘Gentleman Hatfield’ had run off with the Beauty.”

As for the Duchess and her *cortège*, they pursued their route the next morning, with the exception of the “real” Colonel Renmore, who remained behind at Keswick, in order to be on the spot to give his evidence in the “frank-forging” affair, with a view to the committal for trial of Hatfield, in case the pursuers of this “difficult prey” should be successful in apprehending him. So, until we meet her lovely and benevolent Grace again, in the future events of our story, we bid her—farewell.

CHAPTER XIV.

“One moment these were heard ;—another
Past ; and the two who stood beneath that light,
Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other.”
SHELLEY.

THE echoes of the laughter-shout that arose over the discomfiture, or “ducking,” to use plainer language, of Quandish, just reached the ears of the fugitives at the further end of the lake, as they now pursued their way, hidden by the crags that skirted its north-western shore.

“They seem merry!” said the pseudo-Colonel ;—for, as his lovely companion, and Mr. Fenton, to whom they were going, knew him only, and could address him alone, by this assumed designation, we must still continue to call him by it for the present. “Too merry,” he added, “to miss me from the race,—at least, I trust so,” he said to himself, in a lowered tone.

“What was it that old Mike whispered to you,

with such seeming earnestness, as he ran his boat by the side of yours and leaned over to speak to you?" asked Gertrude.

"Nothing, love; except that he recommended me to snatch the opportunity of quitting my rivals in the race at a spot so favourable as that where we landed."

"Good old man!—he could not have been more willing to further our escape if Quandish himself had been haunting our way."

"Which," observed Renmore to himself, "was unfortunately the case!" and then raising his voice, continued, "You say truly, dear Gertrude; we owe much indeed to old Mike, if it were only for the interest he has so constantly shewn in our cause, against the jealousy and insidious hypocrisy of our common enemy. But yet more, he has——" and here Renmore paused, as his voice hesitated.

"Has what, dear William?" (his real Christian name was James,) inquired Gertrude, eagerly, as she pressed the arm of her lover on which she leaned to her own.

"Why, if you must know, Gertrude, the purport of Mike's communication to me in the boat was precisely of the nature you suggested in your last remark."

"Was, then, Quandish on our track—trying to

prevent our escape? Were we felons, he could not trace us more eagerly in the endeavour to capture us!"

"*Felons!*" thought her companion, with a feeling that bespoke he was too conscious of the justice of the remark as applied in his own instance; but he continued, giving it a different complexion—"Felons, indeed, you may say! and little better does he regard us as being, since he considers that *you* have stolen away his peace! and that *I*, a yet happier 'felon,' have stolen away *you!*" and he pressed her hand as he spoke, and smiled; while he continued, with characteristic artfulness, and in a tone of gaiety that completely diverted her mind from any inkling of suspicion as regarded design on his part—"It would be a pity, really, not to carry through this game of mocking the hypocrite-preacher, since we have begun it so well! What do you suppose he is on our track for? or was—for I hope he has found himself baffled in his pursuit. Why,——"

"To try and take me back to Buttermere?" interposed Gertrude, innocently.

"To be sure!" continued her lover, plausibly. "Of course, his object would be to take you away (if he could) from me, on the authority of your mother's name and direction, and place you at Buttermere again. Now, it has occurred to me,

that as possibly he may track us to Lorton, and inquire for you and me too at Mr. Fenton's, it will be as well to let the domestics remain in ignorance of my name — 'Renmore;' and as to offering another in its place—why, if any one asks for me—or inquires if any gentleman has been at the house—they may give in answer, the name of 'Smith, Jones, Stubbs, Jenkins, Green, Brown, White, Williams,' or any of the extensive catalogue of those commoner names, they please!" and he laughed as he spoke.

"Indeed, yes; it is a good precaution!" replied the unsuspecting Beauty, smiling.

"As for Mr. Fenton, he will, of course, not be willing to give any information about our being, or having been, under his roof, to this Quandish, whose application he cannot but consider as so much impertinence. It is in him we place confidence; and well acquainted as he is with the reasons, as regards yourself, of our seeking refuge under his protection, of all persons he would repel this Quandish, whose malignant character he cannot but feel an abhorrence for. I trust, however, we shall have been united beyond the power of Quandish or any one else to separate us, before this miscreant can come up with us, or find us at Mr. Fenton's. So much as we have the start of him, I have little doubt we shall be on our way from

Lorton to seek a happy refuge in the north of Scotland, or abroad somewhere, ere any pursuit can reach us. Therefore, as to Mr. Fenton, no disguise of my name is necessary—or if, indeed, I did adopt one, he would readily consider me as justified in doing so.”

“I’m sure he would; for much did it concern him to hear from me the continued vexation I have endured from this man—this Quandish—and the stratagems I was obliged to exercise, in self-defence, to evade coming in contact with him. But when I see him, he shall yet more be made acquainted with the outrage of yesterday, which renders my present step not only justifiable, but necessary for my safety.”

So spoke the Beauty, in reply to her lover’s plausible representations. Little did she dream, when he suggested to her, with so much dexterity—so much well-guarded and dissembled reserve—that Quandish might still possibly be in pursuit of them, how much more might have been imparted concerning the cause of such pursuit—how much more, too, might have been added as to the nature of Mike’s communication. For the old man had, at the time he told him to “fly for his life,” whispered to him, in a few brief and hasty words, the circumstances that had just been occurring at the post-office, some little time previously to Quandish’s setting out on the pursuit.

It has been already shewn how faithfully old Mike had performed his promise of taking care of his beautiful charge, and yielding her to our hero in the morning as appointed. It should seem that, subsequently to this, he had crossed over to the Keswick, or eastern shore, and having been made acquainted with the circumstance at the post-office, as just mentioned, instantly launched his skiff, and darted, as we have seen, to the side of Renmore's boat, conveying him the fearful intelligence of the peril in which he stood.

Little, indeed, could Gertrude have imagined on what a precipice of danger her lover had been "sporting" (literally) at the moment of the old man's communication. She had now been made acquainted by him, in his usual plausible and dexterous manner, that the object of her disgust and dread was possibly still seeking them out,—but for how different a reason to the real one! Had even Quandish come up with them, and uttered the whole accusation of which he was conscious, against her lover, yet so malign had she experienced his character and disposition, that she would have willingly considered his criminations as so many outbursts of a rancorous and revengeful spirit. On the other hand, when she turned from the malignant man and baffled suitor, what would she not believe in favour of him in whose behalf love

pleaded (so deservedly, as she felt) to her heart ! All that hate could have urged against him would scarcely prevail.

Often did Hatfield, or Renmore, look back on his track, to see if he could descry any persons on horseback or foot, apparently in pursuit ; but no cause of alarm presented itself ; and in fact, it is not difficult to suppose, that without any certain guide as to the direction taken by the fugitive, the pursuers were at fault, or on a wrong scent.

Cheered by this consideration, our hero urged on towards Lorton, his heart beating anxiously for the successful issue of his flight thither ; while Gertrude's beat in unison with his own, as far as regarded the object of their union, though utterly unconscious of the further motive which animated her lover's feelings. He had expressed to her, as we have lately seen, the expediency of their instantly, after their union, hastening from the neighbourhood, to Scotland or France, or some other distant place of abode, for the obvious reason, as far as he suggested, of her not encountering her parent's displeasure ; while the securing his own life was the fearful warning his conscience tacitly whispered to himself.

Onward, then, they fled. The mountain-maiden's knowledge of the wild regions through which they hurried as fast as the difficulty of the way would permit, was of infinite service in

expediting the progress of herself and our hero; for the village of Lorton, which, by the direct road from Keswick, was a distance at least of eight or ten miles, was reduced to less than half that extent by the by-paths, the devious lanes, through copses, and the chasms of rocks, by which the lovers went. It was consequently not much more than one hour and a half from the period of their issuing from the boat on the bank of Derwentwater, that they now discerned the grey spire of Lorton church, peeping forth above the sombre elms and Scotch firs with which the village was surrounded; while conspicuous in a place by itself, rose the venerable yew-tree,* “pride of Lorton vale,” as the poet justly terms it.

“A happy omen,” cried Renmore, as he pointed out the spire to Gertrude, — “a happy omen again, dear Gertrude. It is the same object that shewed itself on our first meeting on Melbreak; and it is the first object that now greets us on

* The Lorton yew-tree, celebrated by Wordsworth, and that also in Patterdale church-yard, are considered the largest in dimensions in England, except perhaps the Ankerwyke yew near Staines. This last is said to have been in existence in the time of King John. Norbury Park, near Leatherhead, contains a number of enormous yew-trees, called by Fuseli, the “Grove of the Furies.” But the Borrodaile yews, called by Wordsworth “the Fraternal Four,” are the most remarkable for their effect, aided so much as it is by their peculiar advantages of situation.

approaching this spot of our looked-for union. That sacred spire seems as it were a finger raised by Heaven (or fate, as our friend Mike would say) to beckon us to the spot where our vows are to be solemnized, our truth consecrated, and the struggle we have made to secure this happiness at length rewarded."

Gertrude smiled and pressed Renmore's hand, as he continued hastily,—“ And now the first thing to be done is for you to proceed to your friend and guardian, Mr. Fenton, and apprise him of the object of your visit.”

“ Without you, must I go?”

“ I will follow you immediately. Why that look of distrust, dear Gertrude? Can you doubt that I shall not keep my word? You might as well doubt my affection for you. But consider, you are well acquainted with Mr. Fenton, and have already opened your heart to him on this subject. I have never yet seen—that is—I am unacquainted with him,” he continued, in a voice that betokened the emotion he had already evinced on former occasions on this subject; “ it is better, then, for you to present yourself to him in the first instance. You are as a child of his own,—but I—I——”

And here he was overcome for a moment by the struggle that secretly agitated him, but which was too sincere to awaken any feelings of a mistrustful

nature in Gertrude's mind, as she looked at him with mingled concern and affection, while she replied, as she thought she detected a tear swelling in his eye—

“And are you, indeed, so unacquainted with Mr. Fenton, and yet speak of him with so much affection on all occasions when his name is mentioned?”

“Yes, love, yes!—but go, we have no time to lose. Be assured, I will not delay long before I come to ask you at his hands; for he, dearest, shall give you away to me. Hasten, love; believe me, I shall be too impatient to come and claim you—doubly dear to me, when I take you under the sanction and from the hands of Mr. Fenton. But you are the person to prepare him in the first instance; for my presenting myself to him, stranger as I am—. So, hasten, love! hasten to his residence!”

He embraced her as he spoke; and then turning down a pathway that led round the village, he looked back and saw her proceeding in the direction of the parsonage-house.

Being left to himself, many thoughts crowded on his mind, the foremost amongst which was the imminent risk he had run of apprehension while sharing the festivities of Derwentwater.

“What!” he exclaimed, “and so my assumed name has at length found a claimant to dispute it

with me. Well, I trust before the report can transpire to this out-of-the-way spot, Gertrude will be mine, and both of us far away from the reach of danger! The plague of this man—this Renmore, whose name I had assumed,—coming from abroad, as he must have done, at this moment—and to this spot of all others in the world! He was an invalid in the south of Italy not long ago, and no one knew anything of him here. Unfortunate fellow that I am! to think he should have thus unexpectedly returned! Had I imagined such an event, I would have adopted some other *nom de guerre*. It can't be helped. I have the start of my enemies. By to-morrow, ere the sun has mounted far on his course, I trust Gertrude and myself will be one. No one knows our track. It is now growing late—yes, I will trust that before pursuit can find us out or reach us, Mr. Fenton will have united us, and seen us depart. And then will we hasten from the spot—she secure in my love, I may with truth say—and I secure in her love, and—her fortune! For, little though it is, it will be sufficient for us to live on—to keep me from the necessity of any dangerous expedients; and in a foreign land I may yet hope (as I have told her) to pass many happy years with her. And now for Mr. Fenton's house." As he spoke his heart beat violently. Nay, there was, as we have witnessed, (in the

outset even of these pages,)—there was some secret clue to the affections of our hero possessed by Fenton, which (from whatever cause it might be) had agitated him no less strongly than his regard for Gertrude herself.

From the first moment he had taken refuge in the district in which we have found him, he had constantly maintained a conflict with himself, as regarded his wish, and yet hesitation, to see this worthy clergyman. But the trial was at length to be made; and even the thought of Gertrude for awhile gave way to that of his first meeting with Fenton—her adopted father, as he may be indeed considered.

Accordingly, he proceeded to the parsonage-house. It was situate near the church, and built of a sort of red sandstone, which will be called to mind by the reader who has witnessed the material of which Carlisle and Durham cathedrals are constructed. Its style of architecture was the somewhat heavy one of the first and second Georges,—namely, square, and full of windows, exhibiting a melancholy and ungainly contrast to the interesting character of the Elizabethan style that had heretofore prevailed. During the turbid reign of the first Charles, demolition had been the order of the day, as far as regards ecclesiastical edifices; and the reparation of these, according to the original

models, marked the period of the Restoration, more than constructions of any new character. When novelty ensued, it was disfigurement.

However, if the style of the Lorton parsonage-house was not precisely that on which it was most interesting to look, yet its ungainliness was veiled or disguised by the thick and rich mantle of verdure with which the creepers of varied hue and beauty invested its walls. Their arms rambled on all sides, as it were, to meet each other, and then finished their race, hand in hand, as they stretched together over the roof-top. The very chimneys were twined with their ivy wreath, as a Mœnad's spear; and the luxuriance of the hop on one side was mingled with many a tint of green, darker and lighter, on the other, of jasmine and clematis, starred as their foliage was with the blossoms that spangled them.

It was on the outside of the wicket which opened on the walk leading to the porch of the house, that our hero stood. His heart,—not only on account of his betrothed, but actuated by some deep and secret feeling, as regarded Fenton,—urging him to enter; while his step hesitated, as though held back by the painful struggle of indecision, grief, and uncertainty, of which he was conscious.

His hand was on the latch—he raised it—he let it fall again—and wandered along by the side of the ample wall of verdure formed by the thick

privet hedge which flanked the premises. At length he paused, and stamping his foot as though he had overcome the struggle that had been battling within him, he exclaimed—

“I must, I will see him ! Heaven alone knows how the circumstances in which I am placed will terminate ; and before I—I should wish to—I must see him !”

So saying, he retraced his steps to the wicket, and raising the latch, he opened it, and advanced under an arched trellis work, roofed with the tendrils of the scarlet-runner, sweet-pea, and china-rose, till his foot was now on the step of the entrance door. He rang, when who should meet his eyes, as the door was opened, but Gertrude. Her presence was a relief to him under the present tumult of his mind.

“ My dear Gertrude !” he exclaimed, as she answered eagerly, her eyes sparkling with satisfaction at seeing him—“ I have mentioned all to Mr. Fenton. He guessed, from my previous mention of the engagement between us, the nature of my present visit, before the words had escaped me. I then left him, and have been watching for your approach.”

“ And have I been long ?” he asked with a smile ; and she was just about to reply, when her words were interrupted by the entry from his study

of the good Fenton himself. He advanced with a benign and paternal air, holding out his hand to the plighted husband of Gertrude, as though he were meeting a son; for, as may be readily supposed, he had been in no small degree prepossessed by her in Renmore's favour. Nor less did our hero on his part greet Fenton as a father; and the air of respect and reverence with which he acknowledged the good curate's greeting was tempered with a yet kindlier expression, more akin to affection.

Gertrude, on the sudden appearance of Fenton, had retired, while the latter proceeded to address himself to Renmore, "I have been talking to my fair pupil and friend (for she has informed you of our long acquaintance) of the relation in which she stands with yourself, Sir; and as I feel a real interest in her happiness, regarding her as I do, almost as my own child, you may suppose I must also feel no trifling degree of interest in the person who is about to take her to his bosom for life, under the sacred auspices of the church."

Renmore bowed, and was about to utter some remark, when Mr. Fenton proceeded—

"You would therefore oblige me by letting me have a moment's conversation with you, before we fix the time at which the ceremony shall take place."

So saying, he led Renmore into the little study from which he had come, and having motioned him to take a chair, he took a seat himself, opposite his guest. As he sate silent a few moments, with his eyes bent downwards, Renmore had an opportunity of contemplating that venerable countenance, and that fine scope of forehead, that would have made a study for a Domenichino. The countenance bore marks of much, and perhaps painful thought; but a look of benevolence overspread it—benevolence for others, which never permitted itself to be overcome by a selfish fretfulness about individual causes of complaint.

The thin grey locks floated over the forehead, and a tear forced itself into the eye of Renmore, as he sate gazing on the countenance of the venerable person before him, either from associations it inspired, or possibly, recollections—it might be so,—yes, recollections which he was anxious to express—communications he was desirous to unfold, though he dreaded entering on the disclosure.

His eye glanced from the good man's brow to the portrait of a female whose eye seemed bent on him, and to follow him on whichever side he looked at it. He had met it on entering the room. It followed him as he had crossed from the door to the seat he now occupied, and it rested on him now. The countenance was one of the mildest expres-

sion, indicative of a disposition worthy of the person who was the partner in life of so excellent a man as Fenton. In a word, it was the portrait of his late wife. She had died many years ago, and it was said, left her husband childless.

Renmore thought that the mild look of that portrait bore in it a mingled expression of sorrow and gentle reproach. It was thus his fancy or feeling interpreted; but how far his reflections might have led him, or from what secret sources they borrowed their peculiar complexion on the present occasion, it is not yet in our power to explain: whatever they might be, they were now broken off by Fenton's addressing him as follows:

"This young female," said the venerable man, looking in turn intently at our hero, "has placed the most implicit reliance on you, and tells me she believes that no difference of station could ever make you forgetful of the claim she will soon have on your tenderness and protection, or render you indifferent to her after the first possession of her. You know what the world is, Colonel Renmore; you know how little men of your rank in life value the feelings of others when their own caprices or interest operate on them."

"Indeed this is too often the case, my dear Sir, interposed Renmore, "but I trust not universally so."

“ I am willing to agree with you, and am far from considering that so painful a charge is universally applicable ; but how many instances have I known of men of rank marrying, under a strong impulse of passion, females much beneath their own grade in society, and subsequently repenting of their weakness and precipitancy.”

“ True, indeed !”

“ And what has been the consequence ? that they have indemnified themselves in the most unjust and cruel way,—I mean, by shewing every unkindness and harshness to the unhappy object of their former interest, who has now become loathsome in their eyes, as being a clog on their happiness or ambition, which they now in vain strive to shake off. Excuse me, then, for inquiring of you, if you have in charity and honour well considered the step you are about to take.”

“ I have duly considered,” replied Renmore ; “ and feel more and more satisfied with the conclusion to which I have come, the more I consider of it. I feel, that so far from being likely to exhibit any of the caprice you so conscientiously suggest, I shall be bound more and more to the object of an affection that increases in her presence,” (and here, indeed, he spoke with sincerity.) “ Besides,” he continued, “ Gertrude, independently of her personal attractions, has superior

qualifications, compared with those in her walk in life, in consequence of the training her mind has received, as she has informed me, from one so well calculated to inspire it with all that is good and generous—yourself.”

The good curate bowed his head in acknowledgment of Renmore’s kindly testimony of his early good will and care of Gertrude, while he replied, that nature had largely endowed her, independently of any moral training she might have received from him.

“And now,” continued Renmore, “let us proceed to the happier theme—the hour of the ceremony. It shall be to-morrow at eight o’clock : that will be a period before any idle, vacant people, who have nothing to do but busy themselves in the concerns of others, are abroad ; and it will be more agreeable, both to my own feelings and those of Gertrude, that the ceremony shall take place as privately as possible.”

“At eight o’clock, then, to-morrow, Colonel, I shall be waiting to perform the service at the altar of God, who I hope may bless your marriage. And now let me unfold to you a secret relating to your bride, with which even Gertrude herself is not yet made acquainted, and which I feel it due to you to impart. It is the more due, I may add, since it presents itself as a reward to a person of

your distinguished station in life, for putting aside all discrepancy of rank, and loving an excellent female for herself and her virtues."

"What is it you can have to inform me that I do not know of Gertrude? I am all attention."

"That she is the daughter of the late Lord G——," (which confirms what has been heretofore hinted by Dr. Esdaile to our hero, in an earlier stage of our story.) "Her mother, dame Wetherby as she is commonly called, had been in his lordship's household for many years, and when he married, she retired and was placed in possession of the pretty hostelrie and farm attached to it at Buttermere, where she was further married to an old faithful domestic of Lord G——. Gertrude was so interesting a child that his lordship, in one of his visits to her mother, determined on having her educated, and was pleased to fix on myself for the performance of that duty. I took a real pleasure in forming the mind and strengthening the reason of my lovely little pupil, and was happy to see that she had sensibilities and a disposition well worthy of the attention and care I bestowed on her. She would follow the man on whom she bestowed her affections," continued Fenton, with increased animation, "through all hazards and perils of life and the world,—ay, even to death itself—were such his lot!"

"To death!" mentally ejaculated Renmore.

“She is, in truth, of an exalted spirit, no less than of a pure and innocent mind. But to continue the story of her parentage and education. It was Lord G——’s wish to see her well established in marriage before he died, but this wish was frustrated by his decease some years ago. Since that period, Gertrude has been to me almost as a child of my own. It was the desire of his lordship that the secret of her birth should not be revealed until the event of her marriage, when it was to be imparted to her husband; and I was earnestly requested to exercise my authority in directing her to listen to no proposals that were not calculated to secure her happiness. The property her mother holds, you are already aware, no doubt, will be Gertrude’s at her death. The old man who passed as her father had always suspected the circumstance of Gertrude’s real paternity, though he had been led to believe, at the time of his marriage with her mother, that she was Mrs. Wetherby’s child by a former marriage. This old man she always tended till his death, not long ago, with a care and affection truly filial, and which made up to him for the slights and neglect which her mother often shewed him, in consequence of a certain disgust conceived towards her lowly partner, after having been flattered by the more distinguished attentions of Lord G——.”

“Yes!” interposed Renmore, “I have heard

something of this good woman's bearing towards her late husband; and, I may add, that if she had bestowed a little more kindness towards her lovely daughter, it would not have been amiss."

"You do not, then," continued Fenton, "wed a person of ignoble blood, or ungenerous stock, in Gertrude, and I am sure that now you have heard the claims she has on my care and guardianship, you will excuse the expression of that anxiety which it is natural for me—nay, incumbent on me—to feel and evince in her behalf. What I have imparted to you relative to her parentage you can disclose to her whenever you please, or I can do so in the course of the present evening. So come! let us now join her."

So saying, Fenton rose from his seat, but observing that his companion appeared to have something to impart, he inquired of him if such were the case.

"No—nothing—" replied Renmore, hesitatingly, and with an emotion that shewed there *was* something labouring in his bosom, of which he would have wished to disburden it. We may readily imagine that it was connected with that secret of his uneasiness, as regarded the subject of Fenton and himself, by which we have at different times witnessed him so deeply agitated, throughout the course of our story. But whatever this secret

may have been, however desirous he was to reveal it, certain it is that, whether from considerations that it might convey too great a shock at this moment to Fenton—or that a fitting opportunity was not yet arrived for revealing it—the secret remained locked in his bosom, and after stammering out one or two incoherent words, he left the dangerous ground on which he had essayed to set foot, as he spoke thus—

“No, no, really nothing! I had nothing in particular—some other time—in fact, I had forgotten.”

“Surely you must have something to impart? Was it anything relative to Gertrude?”

Renmore readily snatched at this thought, to relieve himself of the embarrassment which the dark subject, whatever it was on, which his thoughts wandered, had occasioned him,—as he hastily replied, as if calling to mind suddenly something he had forgotten—

“Relative to Gertrude—oh! by-the-bye—yes—it is merely to say that after my union with her, I shall remove her altogether from this neighbourhood, since she is so little likely to meet with any countenance from her parent. In fact, I need scarcely remark, that you are fully aware from how much perplexity her alliance and removal with me will save her.”

Fenton assented to this representation, which was offered with all our hero's plausibility of manner, and was expressed with a view to excusing any precipitancy in his intended departure with Gertrude, after the ceremony of their nuptials was concluded.

And now they rejoined the fair object of these remarks, while Fenton, as he entered the room where she was awaiting them, said to her with more than wonted affection—

“Come, my dear child!—come to my arms!—come to the arms of one you not unjustly call your father! And let me have the happiness of giving you to one who I am sure has a heart to love you, and be true to you and his present affection.”

And so saying, he pressed the Beauty to his heart, and imprinted a kiss on her lovely forehead, as he parted the rich auburn tresses that had strayed from their snood, as she bent down her brow on the good man's bosom. He parted those locks with the sacred tenderness of a loving parent, and kissed her brow, as he said, through the tears that rose—

“Heaven bless you, my lovely child; long guard you, and bless you, and give you happiness with this estimable gentleman.”

So saying, he took Renmore's hand and placed it in Gertrude's, as he turned aside his face, and dashed away the tears that found vent.

Renmore could not witness the good curate's emotion without being himself in no small degree moved, as certain compunctious visitings besieged him with respect to the part he was now playing, and was about to carry so far ; but their whisperings were speedily drowned by the all-controlling voice of that passion, which if it was an infatuation, yet was as sincerely as it was deeply felt, and which called for the possession of Gertrude. Though the struggle in his breast was transient, it was no less violent, as the meeting of his lips and her own ratified the approval of Fenton. Those lips were chill—chill,—but from what different causes ! Her's, from excess of deep and sacred passion,—that excess in which the warm life's blood ran back to its fountain, and left the lovely cheek pale in the intensity of her feeling :—his, from the chill in which its darker thoughts transiently subdued the heart, as it shuddered at circumstances which he dreaded might blast the dream of happiness—circumstances more painful, more perplexing from the very uncertainty with which his destiny was haunted.

But the evening was now far spent—it was time to retire ; and the melancholy chime of the village church clock pealed forth its warning of the lateness of the hour, as Renmore, or rather Hatfield, now retired, in order to take up his quarters for the

night at the village inn. Gertrude remained under the roof of Fenton.

“To-morrow, then, at eight, Colonel Renmore,” said the clergyman, as he saw his companion out at the garden wicket where they parted; while his words were answered, or rather echoed back, by our hero, in a sunken and tremulous voice—

“To-morrow at eight.”

CHAPTER XV.

“ Knock ! knock ! ’ith’ name of Beelzebub, who’s knocking so at the gate ! ”

MACBETH.

THE first ruddy streaks of dawn, as they stole over the grey vault of heaven, where the stars were growing fewer and more faint, witnessed Renmore, or Hatfield, abroad, watching the progress of daybreak. There are few men, however guilty, that have not their redeeming traits ; and it is but justice to the character before us, to record the bitterness of that compunctious struggle which now again assailed him with increased power, as the time drew nearer and nearer when he was to seal Gertrude’s fate in his own.

Fevered and exhausted, he had sallied forth after a sleepless night, impelled along by the restlessness that disturbed his spirit. “ Shall I bring her to shame ? ” he thought. “ Shall I involve the innocent, confiding girl in my own too probable ruin ? Is it

not better to distress her by now taking flight—now that there is an opportunity for doing so, and then afterwards write to explain everything, while I sue for her pardon and Fenton's? Is it not better to do this than let her know when it is too late what brand rests on the name of her——”

He shuddered at the thought, as he paused and stood uncertain whether to fly or not. He advanced down the hill towards the lane that led into the high road; and then he paused again, as yet other thoughts, and of a more encouraging character, now arose forcibly in his mind.

“ Shall I, then,” he continued, “ at this last step, when I am just about to obtain all I have been so long striving to effect, shrink from my resolution? Pride and shame forbid me to do so. Where are all those cheering hopes, of hastening with Gertrude beyond the reach of danger and my enemies?—of recompensing myself by this happy result, for a life of hazard and duplicity? Are they all so soon lost?—lost at the moment when they ought to be borne the most strongly in mind? Shall I thus devise plans, and then shrink in the execution of them? Shall I thus desert myself? Is it not enough that a whole world is arrayed against me, and shall I further thus punish myself? Weak and unworthy conclusion! I will be true rather to myself. I will turn back. I will not

shrink from my long and fondly cherished resolves. Pride and shame, I say again, forbid it. And the thought, too, consoles me as regards her, which whispers that should I be overtaken by the danger which I too justly apprehend, yet she will not be without succour or consolation. Fenton—the good, the forbearing, the forgiving—he will not be untrue to her, because she has been true to me! Whatever may befall to discredit me—yet her interests will still be dear to him—she will yet be comforted and protected.”

And from this last reflection he seemed to draw much consolation. Every thought of self was merged in the stronger and dearer one of Gertrude. As regarded himself, he desired not life; death, indeed, were happiness. It was for her he desired to live.

Accordingly, reanimated by the assurance this reflection gave him, he summoned up, once again, confidence in his spirit, and an appearance at least of cheerfulness in his brow. Once again was he able to look with something like a sense of gratification at the rejoicing aspect of morn, which had so lately shone but in mockery for him! Once again he looked more resolutely on the face of day, from which he had but now shrunk! Resolutely looked he, even as he did in the less-encouraging face of Fate itself!

The scene was indeed one of grandeur and beauty, and of whose charm the most clouded and harassed spirit could scarcely be insensible. That singular and beautiful aspect of the heavens witnessed sometimes in the east just before sunrise now presented itself to his view, though speedily to vanish.

A curtain, as it were, of various colours,—woven by the sublime skill that made all things,—spread itself in the radiance of violaceous, crystalline, sapphire, croceous, and emerald hues, over the couch from which the Day-god was soon about to rise. Anon, drawn back by an invisible hand, that dædal curtain slowly and majestically was moved aside—the colours disappeared—and the rejoicing Monarch-luminary, now rose and beamed in splendour on all created things. Up sped he on his course of majestic ovation, as the Roman bard has described it, and as Guido's pencil has portrayed.*

As Renmore, then, with feelings thus once again more tranquillized, looked around him on a scene of so much splendour and gladness, he was con-

* The reader will remember the sublime design of Guido in illustration of the following lines :—

“Quadrijugis invectus equis, Sol aureus exit
Lucifer antevolat.”

strained to feel that the world possessed blessings it were yet well to live for ! The sun-ray that streamed over the hill, awaking all life and nature to gladness, reached to his heart ; and like the Persian of old, touched with devout rapture, he exclaimed, though addressing his orisons to a more supreme source than the ancient sun-worshipper—

“ Oh, God ! forgive me ! spare me—for her sake, not for my own !—for her sake—the pure, the innocent ! ” And the tear stole down his cheek, while his knee involuntarily bowed it, as the words escaped him.

While he was yet thus absorbed, a light step that scarcely brushed away the dews, advanced towards him ; and before he was aware of her presence, a fair form stood near him, and met him with a smile as he rose from his meditation.

At first, being as yet under the influence of the thoughts with which he had sought to propitiate Heaven, he could scarcely help imagining, at the moment, that some angel stood before him, as a happy assurance that his prayer had not been unheeded. But though that face was lovely—that brow pure and radiant enough—that form sufficiently airy for even a spirit—yet in those features he recognised his own lovely Gertrude, and her presence brought him to himself. He caught her in his arms, and pressed her lips to his

own, while he held her for awhile in his embrace.

“I was offering a prayer to Heaven for our happiness, dear Gertrude, when you came upon me!” he said. “Your heart joins with mine in that prayer! I consider your presence at this moment a token that Heaven itself gives you to me! and here I receive you in the face of the mighty Giver’s throne, these magnificent realms of earth, those heavens of splendour—to whose dread and mystic spirit I have been pouring forth my orisons of joy, and awe, and gratitude!”

He was silent a moment, as he clasped her again to his heart; and though he spoke not, yet his lips moved, as if uttering some fervent words of hope and entreaty, while his eye looked to Heaven in supplication.

This being past, he left the theme, and walking along, with his hand clasped in hers, he said—

“And how comes it, love, that you found out my wanderings at this early hour, and followed my steps hither?”

“I was awake at daybreak; and not being able to sleep, I walked out to look at the carnations I had set for Mr. Fenton, when I was last at his house, and was willing to pass the time in this occupation, till——”

And here a blush overspread her cheeks, and

the smile played on her lips as Renmore took up her words—

“Well, love; till that happy hour which shall make us one? Ah, let us see! the time advances,” he added, as he took out his watch; “there is an hour and a quarter yet to elapse. Well, love, as you were busy with your carnations——”

“I happened to turn my eyes in the direction of the hill overlooking the village, and seeing some one moving up its slope, I thought it might possibly be yourself, as you are so early a riser.”

“And so you came to meet me! I thank you, love!—I thank you from my heart: every moment passed with you is precious.” And here he became silent for awhile, his mind being again transiently assailed with melancholy forebodings, that it was possible they might be parted sooner than either of them would wish. She looked at him inquiringly as she observed—

“I hope we shall pass many moments, hours, days, years, together! Why should we not?”

“There’s no reason at all, love—no reason at all!” he replied. “But if we were to pass moments, hours, days, years, together,—multiplied on each other,—that would not render one atom of the time less precious to me, my beauty.”

And he now conversed with her in the unrestrained cheerfulness which was usual with him,

and in that confiding interchange of thought—graver or gayer—in which he had passed many an hour's ramble with Gertrude before. He seemed more than ever to take interest and pleasure in the present moments he passed with her, perhaps because he felt they might possibly be the last, (such was the uncertainty of his perilous destiny,) and hence the more precious; at any rate, if not the last in time, they might be the last in happiness.

In this manner the hour was beguiled: time quickly winged its way. They were summoned from the spot where they were by the church-clock of the village, which chimed the quarter to eight. Oh! how its sounds thrilled the heart of Renmore, with a sense of anxiety more than joy; but he drowned it. Already the good priest had repaired to the church, to array himself in his sacerdotal robes for the sacred solemnity.

Gertrude repaired to his house, to make such slight preparation as was alone needful, where no pomp, no ceremonial, had existence. The pure joy of her heart was her best hymeneal, the light of her brow her best decoration, the treasure of her charms her richest dowry. The bridegroom paced up and down anxiously through the avenue of yews,* beneath whose sepulchral branches the

* These do not include the celebrated "Lorton yew" of which notice has been already taken in the previous chapter.

church porch was approached. He needed not now to have any gloomy associations awakened in his mind; he would gladly have had his path flowered with roses, as if to light the spark of one brighter, one gladder, thought to lure him from the menaces of death and doom which Mike's warning on the lake had so lately apprised him of, as impending a little more closely than might be convenient. He longed with impatience, therefore, to have the ceremony over, and be on his way with Gertrude, beyond the reach of the pursuit that might possibly be too near.

Turning abruptly away from the grove of gloom, (for those sepulchral yews would have formed a meet trysting place for the Furies) he wandered now outside the cemetery, by a fairer path. No one was less a prey to superstition than our hero, as his friend Mike would upbraidingly attest; but still his present equivocal condition did not assuredly require any additional cause for distasteful reflections.

Misfortune, if it "subdues the mind," as Shakespeare expresses it, and hence renders it a prey to superstitious bodings, in the absence of any real and substantial succour, had no such effect on Renmore. The source of his spirit-stir was the *uncertainty* that still perplexed him with its constantly shifting lights and shadows. He was sub-

jected to the most trying sensation the spirit of man can be assailed with, and the perplexity and irritation of which is a yet severer infliction than any certainty itself of evil or harm ! The “certainty of danger,” said we ?—Let it but shew its face plainly, and no longer skulking in its ambush, and then the daring character of our hero exhibits itself in all that cool presence of mind, that confidence in self, which made him smile in the face of opposition—that adroitness, at once, and determination of enterprise, that distinguished him. If we have heretofore witnessed this in his various encounters with his arch enemy, Quandish, we may yet further have to witness it through wilder and sterner trials.

He wandered then, now, outside the cemetery, by the sweet-briar hedge which skirted it, and which, starred as it was with the dog-rose, white briony-flower, and honey-suckle blossom, sent forth a grateful odour, and presented fairer images to the mind, of rural charm and contented being, amid the paths such flowers decorate.

But he started now amidst his musings, as the sound of steps and rustling of female gear were heard in the lane that approached the spot, while the clock at length chimed the wished-for summons for his repairing to church. The steps that approached were those of Gertrude and an aged

dame that followed her from the parsonage house, in which she was a domestic. The bridegroom—"the bridegroom of fate," we may term him—and his destined bride, entered the holy porch together; and here her foot chanced to stumble as she crossed the threshold of the doorway; and a less guileless and confiding being than herself would have drawn an ill-omen from the circumstance, according to the simple superstitions of the country. But Gertrude left this to the old female who walked behind her, who, with the fatuity of a genuine old crone, muttered out involuntarily, "Ha! that's unlucky!"

Gertrude, however, only felt that it was her lover's arm—her husband's—that supported her step, even as his love supported her heart. Her thoughts were alone on him—on his affection, his protection, his truth, and the happiness she alone looked for or could prize as it should be involved in his.

A brief space intervened, and now the rite was performed—the benison pronounced—the pair were one. The gratulations of the good priest were yet on his lips, when a loud and impatient knocking startled the whole group, roused from its solemn propriety the sacred edifice, and filled the vaulted roof, gallery, and pillared aisle, with echoes at once discordant and profane.

Mr. Fenton immediately expressed his surprise at the cause of the clamour, and went in the direction of the church doors, which, by a prudent precaution on the part of our hero, had been kept double-locked. The representation to the sexton on the preceding evening, of his desire of having the ceremony uninterrupted and unintruded on, aided at the same time by the convincing argument of a *douceur*, had completely prevailed with that grave-digging worthy. He was now, accordingly, most conveniently dilatory, while the bridegroom, pretending no less surprise than Fenton, repaired to the small portal of the vestry that opened on the other side of the churchyard, while he desired Gertrude, with a composed air and a smile, not to be alarmed, and consigned her to the care of the old domestic who had accompanied her to the church. The knocking, meantime, still continued, and with increased impatience; and now the sound of crowbars, or some such ponderous instrument, was heard applied to the folding doors, as though to force them open.

Fenton in vain raised his voice to request the assailants to desist, and called for the sexton to come and unlock the doors. His voice, it is needless to say, even if it had rivalled in power and volume that of fifty Stentors and five-hundred Lablaches, would have been drowned in the

echoes of the church, which were permitted to have no cessation. The sexton, a bit of a knave himself, had been so well tutored and bribed in the course of the instructions Renmore had given him on the preceding evening, with a precaution well nigh prophetic, that he forgot not one tittle of the part he had to play, and for which he had been so amply "remembered!" Amongst other little items, he had been instructed to enter the registry of our hero's marriage according to his real name, and as apparent on the genuine "licence" signed by the ordinary. This, by-the-bye, had been procured by our hero on the occasion of his expedition to Cockermouth, so that the validity of his marriage had been secured. To satisfy Fenton, he had shewn the worthy clergyman a counterfeit document, bearing his fictitious name, in which, however, the ordinary's signature was so faithfully executed that it was impossible to detect one false stroke in the whole manual manœuvre.

Thus, with a "laudable diligence," no less than consistency of character, we find our accomplished hero still labouring in his vocation of deceiving his fellow-men; and while they would call it "forging and swindling," he would call it making them dupes of his dexterity! By such different names are the same things often called, just as things are seen through different "media!"



the king, and said: and, to the same end, the king, and the
 duke, inquired for a person called by the name of the king.

But to return to the church. The sexton at length came forward with well-assumed bustle, and proceeded to move back the ponderous wards of the lock, with a key big enough to have rivalled that of marble in the hand of St. Peter's colossal statue at the Vatican.

The door-folds of British oak, tough and black with age, well rivetted too, and ribbed with iron, had stood, with their wonted sternness of repose, unshaken and unmoved by the "assault and battery" that had been directed against them. The moment the wards had given way, in rushed the assailants, like an angry tide that has been repressed, and hastens to force its way forward at the first outlet given for the passage of its fury. In they rushed; and to the amazement of Mr. Fenton and the bride, inquired for "a person calling himself Colonel Renmore," declaring that "if he was not one of the party present, he must be somewhere concealed in the church!"

"Concealed in the church!—Colonel Renmore! it is true he is in the church, but not concealed in it! He is close at hand; the tumult you made occasioned his looking to see what it could mean; but what should you want with him?"

"I thought so! I knew I should lead you on the right scent!" exclaimed one of the men, turning round to his comrades, and who acted as a

guide, or jackall, to hunt down the prey of the officers of justice; for such was the character of the assailants. This man, from the malignant smile that played on his lip, the look of malice and treachery that his pallid countenance displayed, was at once recognised by the bride as no other than Quandish, as a shriek of dismay and fear had escaped her, at his untoward intrusion.

After the discipline of "sousing" he had gone through, to the amusement of the party on the lake, his first thought on reaching terra firma again was the prosecution of his revenge. He therefore lost no time in setting to work, and discovering whither the object of his pursuit and persecution had fled. He called to mind that Gertrude had been the sharer of our hero's boat; accordingly, he first of all directed himself to learn the whereabouts of Gertrude; and on repairing instantly to Buttermere, and finding she was not there, he proceeded at once to Lorton on the following (that is, the present) morning, deeming it certain that if not at home with her mother, she must be at the house of her adopted father, Fenton.

"Wherever *she* was, Renmore too (or Hatfield) was to be found." So argued Quandish; and in order that no time should be lost in the apprehension of his desired victim, the officers of justice (already mentioned as lurking at Keswick) were

summoned to accompany him in his second pursuit ; his first with " Master Groat" not having been successful.

Instantly on arriving at Lorton, which they did at about the period of the middle of the marriage service, they called at the parsonage house, and inquired for the persons they wanted.

The domestic, however, could not satisfy them as to the name of the gentleman " who was gone to church to be married," since neither Gertrude nor Fenton had said anything of the matter to any domestic in the house. The intelligence, however, that Gertrude Wetherby was " gone to church to be married to a gentleman," was quite sufficient to urge the party in pursuit to hasten to the sacred edifice.

Quandish's eyes sparkled, his heart beat high with malign impatience, at having now brought, as he hoped, the quarry at length to bay. How would his rancour and jealousy triumph, to mar the union he so envied—to be in time to prevent it, and frustrate the happiness of his rival !

The obstacle they met with in finding the church doors studiously barred to prevent all interruption, only confirmed the suspicion and heightened the impatience of the leader of the pack and his eager followers. And now to take up the story at the point where we left it.

" Has the marriage,"—gasped out Quandish,

livid with rage, and weak with the effort of forcing the door,—“has the marriage——”

“Taken place?” said Mr. Fenton. “Yes, certainly; it was concluded just as you began your assault on the doors.”

Quandish made no answer at first, but stamped his foot on the pavement, and then exclaimed—“He has, then, indeed foiled me!” and as he gnashed his teeth and sank back against the column of the aisle, he darted a malignant glance at Gertrude. She (as we have already witnessed) had been ready to sink under the surprise and terror of this whole unexpected, and to her inexplicable and unaccountable scene. She turned with anxiety to the officers of justice, as Mr. Fenton inquired of them—

“What is it you are in want of? or whom in search for? Did you say, Colonel Renmore?”

“Colonel *Renmore!*” was the reply of one of the men, accompanied with a scornful laugh. “Colonel *Rogue*, he ought more properly to be called! Why, here is another pretty piece of news come to light about this gentleman! He turns out to be the identical swindler that, under the name of Manners, eluded the vigilance of the Dublin justices so long. But come—what are we doing? we are talking while he is making off,” continued the man to his brother myrmidons.

But before we follow them on their pursuit, we must turn to Gertrude.

“Is it possible !” she exclaimed, in a faint voice, as further utterance was denied her, while she sank lifeless on the arm of Mr. Fenton. The bridal wreath fell from her pale, lovely brow as it drooped downwards, and the roses waned on her cheek.

Fenton’s bosom was divided between painful surprise as regarded the charge made against the bridegroom, and concern for the ill-fated girl who was his wife. “I thought there was something on his mind,” he hastily exclaimed to himself, “beyond the subject to which the conversation I had with him related. I remember, now, his embarrassment at the close of his interview with me yesterday evening. And yet, I trust, there is some mistake in all this. If it be true what these men allege——” and then bending his venerable brow over that of Gertrude, as the tear rose in his eyes—“Unhappy girl !” he exclaimed—“beloved, unhappy girl !”

The good man’s thoughts were now solely directed to the care of the cherished child of his adoption ; for such his heart esteemed her ; while it whispered to him on the present occasion that she had yet stronger claims on his tenderness, now that she was beset with misfortune. He therefore

having ascertained that the bridegroom was indeed not to be found, proceeded to leave the sacred edifice with his unfortunate and lovely charge.

Quandish, at the same time, starting from the train of his individual regrets, and the unavailing spleen he had vented at being too late to prevent the envied marriage of our hero, directed now his thoughts to the immediate resumption of the pursuit.

"Let us be gone!" he said, as he hastily took the lead of his comrades. "The game cannot have fled far."

Accordingly, before Mr. Fenton had cleared the threshold of the church-porch, followed by the old female domestic, the myrmidons of justice were again on the track of their prey. They had soon gained the outside of the churchyard palings, but were for a moment at fault, and undecided as to the direction in which they should shape their pursuit.

"Don't go that way," said Quandish, hastily; "that leads back to the cover the fox has just been unearthed from. He is further afield. Go, by all means, in the opposite direction from the village. Be assured we shall soon be on the scent."

"True, true! It must be so; he must have taken this way," said the foremost officer, pointing to a lane that led eastward from the village; "we'll go this way."

So saying, away they hastened.

“That confounded turning at top of the hill, yonder,” said another of the myrmidons, “will favour his escape;—but look, what have we here?” he added to Quandish, as they came to a low wall, over which there was a raised stile made, not of wood, but of a huge slab of red sand-stone, and which led to a pathway across the fields.

“That was his!—that was his!” cried Quandish; “it is a part of his mock military dress. Look at the embroidery! he cannot be far off!” and his livid countenance, as he spoke, wore an expression of fiendish glee, and his keen, deep-sunk eyes twinkled with a ferocity worthy a spirit of evil.

“I say, old man!” cried out, here, the foremost officer, who was about to cross the stile, addressing an aged figure who was sitting on the bank, “have you seen any one pass this way?”

“Ugh, ugh, ugh!” coughed out the old man, as he slowly raised up his brow, over which the thin silvery locks strayed,—“Seen any one pass?”

“Ay! seen any one pass?—a tallish person, with much the appearance (more’s the pity) of a gentleman, and dressed in an officer’s dress?”

“How long ago do you think it may be?”

“Why, ten minutes, perhaps,” said Quandish, inquiringly.

“Why, ay, then, I did see some one pass; and over that stile, across the field, I reckon——”

“What!—where you come out on the Carlisle road?” asked Quandish.

“I can’t say for sartin; but I dare say a did. I shouldn’t know un ag’in were I to see un.”

“*We* should know him again, though, if we were to see him,” they simultaneously cried, as in full triumph of confidence they hurried away from the mumbling old man, to improve upon the hint he had given them. Meantime, when their back was turned, the old man (who was not altogether unlike old Mike), having watched them till they had gone some distance, and made a turning round a hedge so that his movements could not be seen, smiled with a look of contempt, as he said, “You would know him, would you?”

At the same time he looked back, at the foot of the stile, where the men, in their hurry to take the wearer, had left the military cloak which had been dropped there, and picking it up, he put it hastily under his arm, as he proceeded immediately behind the screen of the hedge-side, towards a wood that flanked the field in an opposite direction to that in which he had dispatched Quandish and his satellites.

On the further skirt of this wood led a lane, which, after running for some little way in a south-easterly direction, at length came out on the road leading to the West Riding of Yorkshire. From

this spot he hastened, till he came to a ridge of hill, the height of which he gained with an alacrity of step which did credit to his years ; and then, pausing for breath, he looked back northward in the direction where the officers were now pursuing their vain chase, most probably along the Carlisle road.

With another smile of contempt, he repeated, with a significance which would have well suited old Mike himself—

“ You would know him, would you—ha, ha !” .

It was, however, not the ancient mariner that spoke, but the singular old man whom our readers may remember, as exciting so much the curiosity of Golefield and others at the Buttermere church, and afterwards in company with Mike, in a preceding page of our story.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ *He knows who gave that love sublime,
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate.*”

WORDSWORTH.

“ I climb’d the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn ;
On the right Strathen-edge round the Red Tarn was bending,
And Catchedeeam its left verge was defending—
Where the Pilgrim of Nature trod.”

SCOTT.

THE old man, whom we will call Jackson, as this was the nomenclature by which he will be subsequently seen to designate himself, pursued his way eastward, but not, as he had originally intended, did he continue from the Cumberland to the Yorkshire boundary, but suddenly struck down to the south, into Westmoreland, and ultimately, like a ship “tacking,” shifted his course more to the westward, till at length he found himself at the base of the hoary Helvellyn.

By the time he had arrived at this point, the

afternoon of the day subsequent to that on which he commenced his ramble had arrived. Its route had been circuitous and devious ; now running on the brow of precipices, now sinking into the depth of glens ; and the night had been passed at an obscure little inn, where the peasant weeds, in which he had been hitherto habited, were changed for a plain travelling dress and cloak, which it should seem he had procured at some town through which he had passed.

And now, as he stood on the south-westward brow of Helvellyn, a flood or sheet of light, as it seemed, spread before him, glittering through the foliage of a thick grove of oak, and birch, and sycamore, and on following the mazes of a little wild turf-path, where the tinklings of the sheep-bell alone woke the peaceful echoes of the hill, he came out upon what appeared a majestic river.

He had arrived at its banks through the grove already described, and found now that this sheet of light, that had gleamed so resplendently to his view from the brow of the mountain, was the lovely lake of Windermere, whose smooth surface reflected now the golden blaze of the summer sun. He walked along for some little distance, under the grateful canopy of the boughs that overhung the margin of the lake, when he "was aware," as the old ballads have it, of a person who was seated by

the water-side, under the shade of a gnarled oak, whose twisted roots thrust themselves into the water.

This person was plainly dressed, in the rustic guise of a well-tanned straw hat, with broad brim, and yellow as an old bee-hive; a fustian shooting jacket and ancle boots, thick and sturdy as the oak roots on which their wearer rested them. Plain, however, as his outward gear might be, it could not disguise or detract from the superiority of character perceptible in his countenance; and as he turned round on hearing a footstep approach him, and looked up to see who it was that was advancing, there was an expression, thoughtful at once and serene, cheerful at once and intelligent, that interested Jackson. The silvery locks of this our wanderer—the aspect of sorrow that sobered yet more the brow of age—that feebleness, too, of step, and the bowed frame which supported it on a stick—no less excited in turn the veneration, and engaged the kindly feeling, of the person who now looked up in Jackson's face, as this venerable old man accosted him, inquiring the shortest route to Kendal.

“ I will e'en put you in the way myself,” replied the person, rising from his rude seat; “ and as you appear a stranger in this wild district, it will afford me much pleasure to be of service in pointing out any objects of curiosity that may lie within our ken.”

And so saying, he walked forward along the bank of the stream, followed by Jackson, who replied—

“ You are very good ; but my time will scarcely allow me to delay so long, in this lovely region, as I should desire. Certainly, one spot there is in the neighbourhood which I should have much desired to visit.”

“ And what is that, pray, might I ask ?”

“ Why, Grasmere ; for it is the abode of one whose works must be dear to all who are lovers of nature, and are delighted in finding infused through his page all the chaste and sublime admonishings that her spirit whispers to the heart and mind. I speak of Woodsland.”

A smile played on the lip, and shone in the brow of Jackson's companion, as he replied—

“ And I think I may say, from what I know of Woodsland's character, that you could not have greater pleasure in visiting his place of abode, than he would feel flattered by the compliment, and endeavour to shew himself sensible of it by any attention he could offer.”

“ I have no doubt I should find him everything that is benign as a man, even as he is sublimely simple and chastely fervent as a poet. You know him well, I dare say.”

“ Indeed ! I ought to know him well. Nor

would it be a small or trivial lesson I should have achieved, if, in doing so, I had learned to master that highest trial of philosophy—the Knowledge of Self.”

“ Say you so ? ” replied Jackson, as he looked in his companion’s face with mingled surprise and pleasure ; “ and am I, then, to understand from those words that I am in the presence of the sage and poet himself ? ”

Woodsland (for it was himself) replied only by a reverence of the head, as Jackson continued—

“ Indeed ! I cannot doubt it ! the spirit-workings that are eloquent in that countenance (excuse me, I am no flatterer) were sufficient assurance to me on my first meeting it, that I stood in the presence of no common person. Let me express, then,” continued Jackson, “ how happy I am, circumscribed as I am in the time I am permitted to stay in this spot, to have had the enviable chance of falling in (though only for so brief a space) with one whose sojourn in the neighbourhood affords it its chief interest ;—no less so, indeed, than the residence of his brother bards, Golefield and Routhmore, yield a yet loftier interest to the lovely haunts of Derwentwater.”

“ You speak of friends—of dear brothers to me,” replied the poet ; “ they were both with me at Grasmere but yesterday ; but Routhmore has left

me to repair to the metropolis, where the world is now expecting from the press a noble production of his pen. I perused it with delight in manuscript but yesternight, and if the characteristics of this my brother poet exhibit more of what Homer calls the ‘phreen’ than the ‘thumos’—more of the glow of ‘Mind’ than the depth of Feeling,—yet it is a ‘mind’—‘a phreen’—that unfolds a mine of treasure in the riches of descriptive colouring—of ardent thought, and all the hurry of action.”

“Yes; I have understood that such as you state are more particularly the characteristics of Routhmore as a poet; and much as I admire his writings, yet I cannot help feeling that the main essential of what is strictly poetry exists in Feeling or Passion. To soar to the greater heights of the muse, assuredly Wisdom and Imagination are the sublimer attributes requisite, no less than passion; but in saying this, I regard works of a very superior pretension and scope of plan, such as constitute the epic.”

“True; the general view of any greater plan must be taken by Imagination. But then the details must be warm with passion, with feeling, with sensibility, to sustain its poetic pretension. What a pity, now, is it that my friend Golefield had not less of fancy and airy speculation, and more of imagination curbed by judgment, and

directed to views more suited to the sympathies of his fellow-men."

"You would say, that if such were the case, he would indeed realize all that is requisite to build up the attributes of the highest order of poets?"

"Yes, I do indeed! for to the daring and lofty views of imagination, he would add all the fervour and tenderness of passion, in the passages, scenes, and characters forming the detail of the subject."

"Has *he* left you too, as well as Routhmore?"

"No; I have yet the pleasure of his company, together with that of a gentleman who accompanied him and Routhmore hither, to indulge in his favourite diversion of fishing—for there is famous char in this meer. You, perhaps, may have heard his name—Dr. Esdaile?"

"No, indeed, I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with him—even by name," replied Jackson, while a smile, however, strove on his lip, as though testifying a certain consciousness, that, notwithstanding his disavowal of any such acquaintance, the name was yet not altogether unknown to him.

"He is an amusing, good-natured, and sensible person—Dr. Esdaile; I left him and my 'brother' Golefield together not long ago. The Doctor was busily employed with his angle-rod, by the side of a brook that runs a little further onwards into the

lake—there!” he continued, pointing out a spot along the meer side; “do you see that little creek or bay? it is somewhere about there, that they should be. His companion is, I dare say, stretched under the shade of the boughs, on some moss-bank, hard by, amusing himself with his fancies.”

“Yes, I discern the point you mention,” replied Jackson, who now followed the poet up the slope over which the path ran, diverging for some little way from the water’s edge. Woodsland continued speaking: “We had expected the pleasure, at least Dr. Esdaile led us to hope so, of having an accession, too, to our little party, in the person of a gentleman who has been a visitor in the neighbourhood of Keswick for some time past:—Colonel Renmore, who is, as I am informed, a most agreeable and accomplished person.”

In saying this the poet could not have heard of the “post-office” discovery, which had not yet reached, it appears, his classic retreat at Grasmere.

“What? Renmore, of Clan-renmore, in the county Caithness?” asked Jackson, in a tone of much seeming desire for information.

“Yes, the same. You are perhaps acquainted with that gentleman?”

“Oh, no! not in the slightest!—I merely

recollect the name,—I have heard the name. No doubt his presence would have formed a desirable addition to your party, agreeable as you describe him to be.”

Thus answering, old Mr. Jackson made shift with the aid of his stick to clamber up the ascent after his companion, who had now arrived at its summit, and pausing, turned round to the former as he exclaimed,

“And now you will be rewarded for your pains in fighting up this somewhat steep path, by the splendid view of the meer which you are afforded from it.” And the poet and Jackson stood contemplating the magnificence and beauty of the scene for some moments, as the latter expressed his admiration of it.

“The lake,” he said, “has the appearance of a majestic river, rather than a meer !”

“And beautifully it loses itself in the embrace of those boughs,” added the poet, “that seem to take it into the peaceful bosom of their recesses, as though a home receiving a welcome and beloved guest to its repose !” and after a pause, he continued, “As it wanders tranquilly along, eluding our ken and lost in the distance, it seems to me like a tranquil and happy Spirit entering the bosom of Futurity ! Such thoughts does the effect of distance inspire, in the awe it adds to softer and

more peaceful reflections. Do not say," continued the bard, smiling, "the idea is far-fetched."

"On the contrary, it is a sublime and touching association of ideas that you give utterance to, and elevates the calmer gratification of the sensations awakened by the mere tranquillity of those waters, however lovely."

"You are a kind critic," said Woodsland, with a sigh; "I wish the world would afford us more persons like yourself; but really I have found criticism a rock where my poor pinnacle has been somewhat too savagely tossed, as it has trimmed its sail along a poetic tide not permitted to flow so undisturbedly as that of yonder waters." And the poet paused, as he called to mind some unjust and malignant abuse, which preponderated over all fair criticism, at the expense of the earlier poems he had indited near this spot.

"Never fear," replied his companion, "but that the world will give you the credit which is your due, in time. Your 'pinnacle' will then 'trim its sail,' and float with triumphant colours, (ay, as long as yonder waters shall flow,) down the sublime current of Time!"

Woodsland smiled and shook his head, as he replied, "Ah, poets (or those who aim at being so) amuse themselves, indeed, with some such dream. It is, in sooth, the only source of vitality with

them ; and hard is the struggle to support themselves under the wounds their self-love has to sustain. We must be, I may say as one of the fraternity, very confiding, or (as you will perhaps suggest) very infatuated or conceited ; one or the other of these must we be, to continue, as Milton says, ‘strictly meditating the thankless muse,’ in the teeth of all the derision and rancour so clamorously raised to silence us, or drown our voice.”

“But there is a ‘still small voice’ within—the whispering of a sublime hope within the heart,—that assures you that the mind, of whose excellence and supremacy you are conscious, will one day be appreciated as is its due. The world will make you amends for the wrong done you by a portion of merely partial, or prejudiced, or indiscriminating libellers, who batten, for the most part, on abuse. What real genius ever was there that had not this high instinct ? A grovelling mind may be abashed and cast down by such abuse, and the lyre it awakened be silenced and broken ; but the exalted genius stretches its wing yet more strongly and daringly in the face of opposition.”

“You speak kindly and encouragingly ; and, indeed, there is, I think, some truth in what you say,” replied the bard. Then, standing for a moment absorbed in his own thoughts, he added, “Yes ; there

is a calm, confiding assurance in the bosom," (and his brow shone with a look of lofty hope and confidence,) "that speaks 'soothly,' nay, soothingly, too, (for 'soothly' implies rather 'flatteringly,') as the murmur of yonder waters to the harassed spirit. But to turn from self—is not this a spot," continued the poet of nature, "of real beatitude, in which to calm the wilder emotions of passion, and court the chaste and sublime communings it awakens?"

"Indeed, the poetry of nature nowhere speaks with greater charm, though at the same time with greater softness and tranquillity, than here. And I may remark, that if nature surprise us more, in those wilder and grander features which I have witnessed in foreign climes, yet she is here no less impressive, in a different way; if she startles us by throwing herself (if I may so express it) into the 'tragic attitudes' her fiercer and sterner features exhibit, yet she sways the mind and heart not less impressively, by a spell of a different character, when she pours over the soul that holy yet calm rapture, amidst scenes such as these—where she seems, as it were, to seek a sublimer repose, and to make her home!"

"I am delighted to hear you analyse so justly the attributes of our nobler British scenery," re-

plied the poet, in no small degree gratified to have met with a person who contemplated his favourite scenes with feelings that so much accorded with his own. "You precisely explain, too, the effect produced on my own mind by the bland and lofty spirit of these haunts. This effect is, indeed, 'Religion!' and of this pure spirit would I delight to be a worshipper. I mean to express, by the term 'religion,' that awful charm, that chaste rapture, that grandly soothing sensation, which is the very essence of devotion."

"This feeling, indeed, breathes through your pages; and which, as I confidently augur, the world will ere long——"

But just here the attention of Jackson was called to the sound of footsteps approaching the spot where himself and the poet of nature were conversing. They both turned hastily round to see whose the form should be that advanced, when forth from the thicket which clothed the sides of the hill emerged the figure of a clodpole, who was pursuing his way doggedly along, with a bundle at his back, and who had struck into the path by the meer-side, from the high road, which ran at no very great distance off.

"Why, this is honest Jock, the Buttermere and Keswick carrier," said Woodsland. "I know

the clown well. If Golefield were here, he would amuse himself with 'trying conclusions' with him, like Jacques with Touchstone, the 'motley fool o' the forest.' Well, Jock, how do you, my friend?" he continued, as this worthy had now come up to the spot where the bard and Jackson stood. "Well, Jock, and what news in the parts whence you plod?"

"Why, if mayhap you have not heard it yet, it be news that will make you stare," replied Jock, in his usual style of indirect answering.

"Indeed!" said Woodsland and Jackson both at the same time, though the latter averted his head from the clown as he spoke, appearing to be still occupied in contemplating the beauty of the landscape.

"Indeed!—ay, indeed, you will be surprised to hear it," replied the clown, not, however, thinking proper to gratify their curiosity.

"Well, well! let us hear it; out with it."

"Why, now," replied the clown, with a smile of pretended surprise, "to think you haven't heered it a'ready!"

"If we had, we should not ask you to tell it us," said Woodsland.

"Tell it you—tell what to you?" continued the clown, still beating about the bush, with the oafish

waggery that characterized him. "Mayhap,—mayhap, I say, you know what I be going to tell you. Well, well, don't be angered wi' me. I *will* tell it you. In a word, then, who should you suppose, after all, Colonel Renmore turns out to be?"

"Colonel Renmore!" both Jackson and the bard exclaimed. "Is it of *him* your news is? Who should he turn out to be, pray, but himself?"

"Not a bit of it," replied Jock; "but somebody else, and who else should you think?"

"How can we possibly tell? Pray be explicit, my good fellow, and speak your story at once," said Woodsland.

"Why, then, if you must know, he turns out to be the famous 'Gem'man Hatfield' himself! Ay, you may stare, my worshipful masters, but the truth is as I say—no one talks of anything else in all the parts about Keswick."

"Hatfield!" exclaimed both Woodsland and Jackson. "Is it possible?" continued the former, turning round to his companion; "then, after all, I need not so much regret the Colonel's engagements having deprived our party of his company."

"I suppose," proceeded Jackson, but still scarcely looking Jock straight in the face, "the

officers of justice are on the pursuit after him? perhaps have apprehended him by this time."

"Ay; maybe they have," replied Jock; "though I'm sure I don't care if he gets away from 'em, for a kinder body never lived, that I *will* say for him," continued the clown, thumping his bundle down on the rock-bank; "for I never sarved any one who behaved so handsome to me, though it wor but for a short time." And here Jock explained, to the surprise of Woodsland, how he had been in the capacity of groom for a brief period to the *soi-disant* Colonel Renmore.

Mr. Jackson also testified his surprise, but suddenly remembering that his time was precious, and that he had already delayed longer than he had intended, now took leave of the poet, with many expressions of gratification at having fallen in with one who, it was needless for him to say, had so much claim on his interest.

"I wish you could have found it in your power to have given me your company at my hermitage at Grasmere; you would have been gratified in meeting my brother bard, Golefield; and Dr. Esdaile would have entertained you."

"I should have been indeed delighted to accept your kind and flattering invitation, if it were possible for me to do so; but I fear I must lose no

time in reaching Kendal; and if you could put me in the direction of the road thither, I should be much obliged."

"Then you will promise me, should your movements bring you back into this neighbourhood at any future time, to favour me with a visit?"

"I shall be honoured and delighted in paying my respects, which I shall (I need scarcely say) make a point of doing."

"What? does the gem'man want to go to Kendal?" interposed Jock; "why, I'm a-going that way on my journey to Lunnon after a new place. I'll shew you the way, Sir," he continued, touching his hat with awkward civility, and preceding Mr. Jackson on the way.

"Thank you—thank you, my good friend," replied Jackson; "I am much obliged to you."

So saying, he shook hands with Woodsland, and followed Jock, by a little narrow and winding path that led through the wood that skirted the lake side, till it came out on the high road to Kendal in a southerly, and Ambleside in a northerly direction.

"Oh! here we are on the road," exclaimed Mr. Jackson, as they had now arrived at the termination of the lane. "I'm much obliged to you, and can now proceed perfectly well by myself. So

you can pursue your way, my good friend, while I rest here on the bank a moment ; and here's for your pains."

So saying, he gave Jock a small coin to drink his health, which remembrance having been duly acknowledged by the clown, with a touch of the hat and a "thank ye, Sir," Mr. Jackson was not sorry to find (for reasons best known to himself) that he was alone, once more.

And, in fact, so much does it appear that he wished to escape all chance of again incurring the companionship of Jock, that he diverged from the high road, into a lane on the opposite side of it to that on which the lake was situate ; and when Jock, with that curiosity which was an ingredient in his character, looked round to spy if the "old gentleman" was still resting himself on the bank, he stood transfixed with oafish amazement to find he had vanished, and was nowhere to be descried.

"Well ; that's odd, howsomdiver," he exclaimed, as he continued to plod his way along.

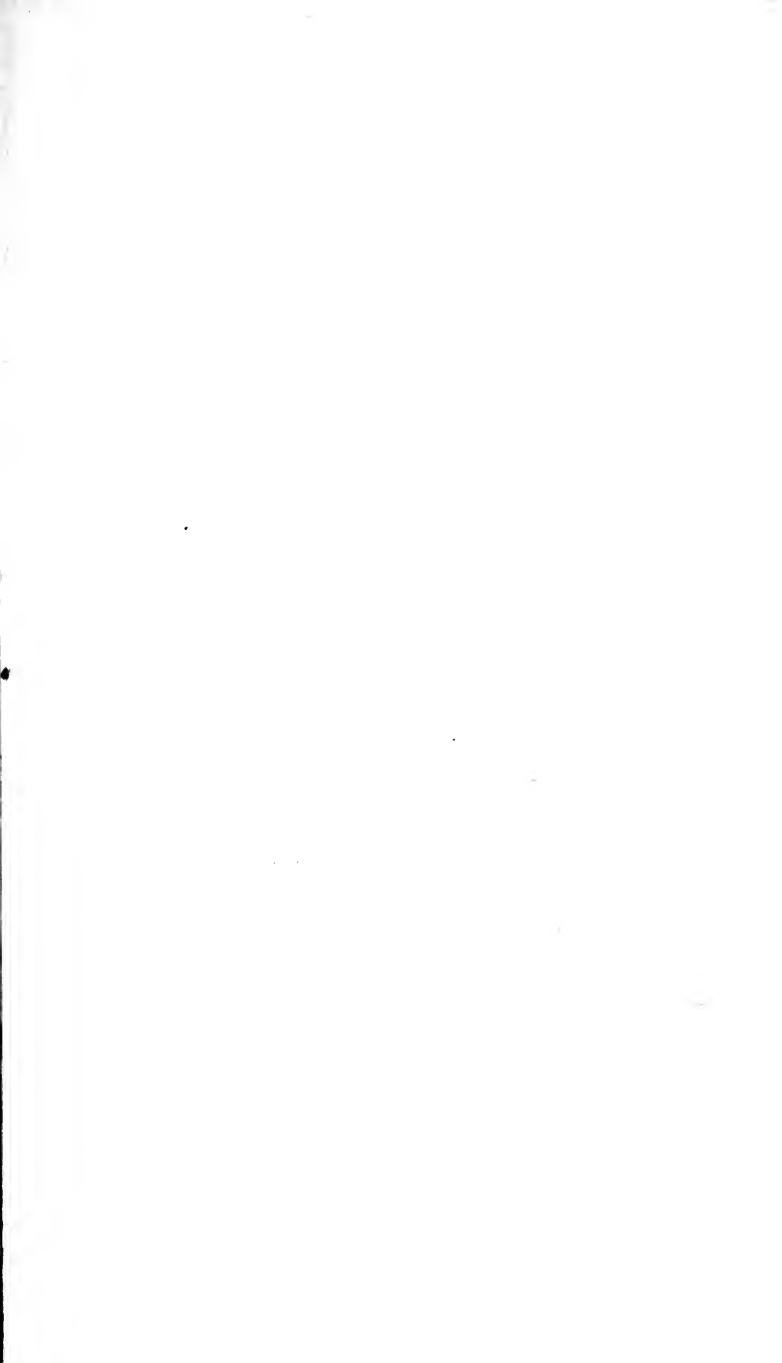
Leaving him, then, to pursue his course along the "highway," and Mr. Jackson, also, his course along the "by-way," we will return to Woodsland.

He was, of course, all impatience to unfold the intelligence which Jock's budget had afforded him to his friends Golefield and the Doctor ; so to find

them out, he hastened in the direction of the brook where he believed them to be. We will, however, anticipate him in his arrival at this spot, in order to see what morning's sport our friend the char-angling Doctor had enjoyed, whom we left some time ago merrily journeying in the company of Golefield and Routhmore, by way of Crummock water, on their visit to Woodsland.

END OF VOL. II.









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